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'THE MOMENT YOU SET FOOT UPON THIS LEDGE I WILL THROW THE BOY DOWN UPON THE LIMESTONE
AT THE FOOT OF THE BLUFF.'

Gypsy Mag, the Mountain Witch;

OR,

THE MYSTERIOUS MUTE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE HORSE-THIEF'S PUNISHMENT.

"DRAG him out!" "Thief!" "Brand him on the face!" "To the stocks with him!" were the various cries which echoed through the little settlement. A crowd of men of all conditions were grouped about a single man, striking, pushing and dragging him into the open space in the center of the village. Men who wore the uniform of the colonial militia, broadcloth, homespun and buckskin. Men of the mountain and the woods, and men of the towns, vied with each other in heaping insults upon a dark-faced wretch in a hunting garb, who, for some reason, had awakened their animosity. He was a stalwart, dark-browed young man, with an evil eye, and bristling black hair, and a beard of many days' growth. Scoundrel was written upon every line of his dark face, and his evil eyes, even while they glanced from face to face in terror, had a lurking menace in them which was horrible.

"You let up, will you?" he hissed. "You may repent this before you are done with it."

"Shut his mouth if he dares to speak," cried a young man in a hunting dress. "To the whipping-post with him, and give him the law of Moses, 'forty—save one.'"

"You'd better be careful, Ralph Campbell," screamed the prisoner. "Tom Dockstader never forgits, he don't. I'm a free man, and you'd better let loose on me."

"You may thank your fortunate stars that we don't hang you, Master Tom," replied the other, laying his hand upon the collar of the speaker. "The boys wouldn't need much urging to give you short shrift and sudden cord. Where is Tim Murphy?"

"Here I am, Ralph," cried a hoarse voice. "At hand always, by mighty."

These words were hardly spoken when a man broke through the crowd and seized Dockstader upon the other side. He was of powerful build, with an irresistibly comic face, crowned by a head of flaming red hair, which stuck out in every direction from beneath a rusty coonskin cap. His twinkling blue eyes beamed with delight in the prospect of a row, and he hauled his prisoner on toward the whipping-post with a power of muscle which was needed, for the man fought like a demon, and it was all the two strong men could do, aided by the pushing of the crowd behind, to move him forward. As he went he blasphemed heaven and earth, and called down unheard-of maledictions upon the heads of the two who held him. In spite of his struggles, they finally succeeded in dragging him to the post and binding him with many cords.

"Now then, Tom Dockstader, here you are," cried young Campbell. It has been proved beyond a doubt that you have made a business of horse-stealing since you have been in Cherry Valley, and at last you are caught in the fact. You know, or ought to know, the penalty among bordermen, and that we have the right to enforce it. The penalty is death!"

"You dursn't do it," roared Dockstader. "I dare you to do it; I've got friends."

"Not in Caerry Valley, Tom."

"I don't care; you'd better let me loose."

"Do you deny that you were caught, not only with my horse, but Tom Murphy's, on the road to Springfield?"

"What's the use of my denying it? That won't do no good, I reckon. I took the horses, yes; I took 'em, and I'd do it ag'in. You just loose these cords, and I'll fight any two of you a fair stand-up fight, give and take. You don't dare to do it, you cowards."

"Strip him, boys," said Ralph Campbell, turning to the others. "Mercy is thrown away on him, and the quicker we get this job off our hands the better for all concerned."

They were not very particular in their manner of stripping off his hunting-shirt, literally cutting it from his person with their knives. Then they seized his wrists to the top of the post, stretching them as far as they would go, and tying them fast. During the operation Dockstader literally foamed at the mouth, but his rage was of no avail, and he stood at the post with his back bared, waiting for the infliction of the punishment.

"This man has been fairly tried," said Campbell, "and upon his own confession is found guilty of the crime of horse-stealing. I'll put that down in Cherry Valley, boys. Shall I give the sentence?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the excited crowd.

"Then I order that the prisoner receive forty lashes, save one, upon his bare back, and sit in the stocks until sundown. Tim Murphy, you will carry the sentence into execution."

A bundle of green beech-rods had been provided, and taking one of these in his hand, Murphy took his station and fixed his eyes upon the naked back of Dockstader.

"Now!" cried Campbell. "One!"

The lash fell, and a livid streak rose at once upon the back of the prisoner, extending from his shoulder to his waist, while a yell of agony broke from his lips. An old woman, white-haired and wrinkled, broke through the crowd and threw herself between the captive and his torturer, receiving the second lash herself. A fierce, dark-skinned withered hag, dwarfed and bent, whose eyes seemed to shoot out living fires as she looked at Murphy.

"Cowards!" she screamed. "Oh, my boy, my boy; they'll murder you!"

"Gypsy Mag, the Witch!" was the murmur which went from mouth to mouth. "It's her son; you can't blame her for caring for him."

"Take her away," said Campbell. "This is worse than folly, Mag. Your son has been convicted of a grave crime, and we are doing no more than justice when we flog him. Stand aside and let the punishment go on."

"I curse you with the curse of the old, if you

strike another stroke!" screamed the hag. "Take care, Tim Murphy. May the arm rot off at the shoulder if you raise it."

A shudder passed through the crowd as she spoke. In this early day, people had not yet quite got over their ideas in regard to witchcraft, and though the days had gone by when all old women of ugly face and form were regarded as witches, yet there was something of the old leaven of superstition remaining, and there were many in Cherry Valley who would not have sworn upon oath that Mag the Witch was not leagued with evil spirits. Indeed, she had a bad name, and young wives and mothers would frighten their fractious children by pointing her out as the one who would seize upon them and carry them away if they were *not good*. Tim Murphy, like most men of his class, was rather superstitious, and the rod dropped from his hand.

"This creature must not be permitted to obstruct the course of justice," said Campbell. "If no one else will take her away, I will. I gave you credit for more strength of mind than to permit yourself to be frightened by a toothless old woman, Tim."

"She's the kind can set the ghosts on you," said Tim, in a low tone. "Don't touch her, Ralph. She's got the evil eye, sure."

"Bah!" replied Campbell. "Now then, Mag, will you leave the prisoner, or must I remove you by force?"

"I'll take the blows myself!" screamed Mag. "I'm old, and it don't matter what you do with me, but he's my only boy."

"A hopeful youth he is, too. You must come away."

"Never."

Campbell, without hurting her, took away her clinging arms, when she swung herself loose, and waved a sharp blade before his eyes, and made a thrust at his breast which but for his quickness must have resulted fatally to him. But her wrist fell into his broad palm, and he held her fast, snatching the knife from her hand.

"Take her into the house," he said. "She is crazy."

The screams of the woman died away as two of the men hurried her into a house, and Murphy again took up the rod. During the excitement the prisoner had not uttered a sound, but the baleful light in his eyes showed that he was watching every movement.

"Drat you all," he said at last. "You'd better not hurt the old woman. She'll have her revenge out of you if you do."

"Now, Tim," said Campbell. "Two!"

The punishment went on. It is needless to harrow the feelings of the reader by a further description of it. Cruel as the punishment was, it was rendered necessary in a section where lawlessness and crime were beginning to hold full sway, for it was at that turbulent period just before the Revolutionary struggle, when Tory and Whig were beginning to hate each other, and plot for the supremacy. It was the more necessary in a place like Cherry Valley, where civil law had very little hold upon the factious element. The last blow was struck, the tattered garments of Dockstader thrown

over his lacerated back, and he was led away to the stocks.

"How long must I sit here?" he said.

"Perhaps until sundown. After that we will give you a day to get out of Cherry Valley. If you are seen here from this day, look out for yourself," replied Campbell.

"I'll take care of myself after that, Ralph," replied Dockstader. "You leave me now, since you've done all the hurt you can."

The crowd separated, and left him sitting in the stocks. His back was burning like flame, but that was nothing to the fire which raged within his bosom. The man was a criminal of the worst type, and there was murder in his heart. His fierce eye ranged about the village, and mentally he was devoting them all to destruction, and plotting how in the future he could revenge himself upon them.

"Let Cherry Valley look to itself when the time comes, for Tom Dockstader will not soon forget the cruelty of to-day."

At this moment a door was opened in a house close at hand and a young woman came out, holding in her hand a pitcher and glass. She approached the stocks and Dockstader looked at her closely. A beautiful girl, with sunny brown hair falling in rippling curls upon her shoulders, and a beautiful complexion and deep-blue eyes.

"Would you like some water?" she said, kindly. "I am sorry to see you here, sir."

"I'd not be here of my own will," replied the prisoner, grating his teeth. "Why do you come here, you, that are Ralph Campbell's wife?"

"I thought you might like something to drink," replied the woman, pouring out a glass of water. "You must not blame my husband, for he was forced to punish you."

"Was he?"

"Yes. The people made him captain of the Vigilance Committee, and he could do no less. Drink some water; you must be in pain."

"I am on fire," he replied, drinking greedily from the glass she placed at his lips. "So you think Ralph Campbell couldn't help it?"

"He is too kind-hearted to delight in giving pain," she answered.

"Is he? I'll try his kind heart some day. More water! Give me the pitcher."

She placed the pitcher to his lips and he nearly drained it, never once removing his eyes from her, but Myra Campbell had a kind heart, and she let him drink until he had enough.

"Ralph Campbell hunted me down and tied me to the post, and his wife gave me drink. I suppose you think that one act is a sort of balance to the other," he said.

"I never thought of that," she answered.

"I've heard say he sets great store by you," he continued. "That's your little boy at the door, ain't it?"

"Yes; he is five years old."

"A nice boy, too. What do you call him?"

"Ralph."

"Yes. Named after his father. No doubt his father would die sooner than see him come to harm. Eh?"

"Of course he would. Why do you speak of the boy in that way? Surely you would not be cruel enough to do him any harm?"

"I ain't got any call to harm the boy as I knows on. I reckon you'd better go away, for your husband won't be none too well pleased to see you giving drink to me."

"My husband; he sent me to give it to you."

"I s'pose he thought I wouldn't take anything from his hand. You go away, I say. Leave the pitcher, for here the old woman comes, and she'll give me more when I want it."

They had set Mag free as soon as the punishment was over, and she was hurrying toward the stocks. When she saw Myra a sort of spasm passed over her face and she gasped for breath, while her hand stole into the bosom of her ragged dress as if for a weapon.

"Adrat it, mother, what are you thinking to do?" said the prisoner. "Don't you see who this is? You don't surely mean any enmity to one of the great Campbell blood!"

"Let her go away then, or I won't be accountable for what I do," hissed the withered hag. "She brought you water and cooled your parched tongue, that you might forget the wrong her and hers have done this day. But when I forget, may the blood leave my body forever and go out of my heart. I'm fifty years old to-day, and I never forgave an injury yet. My poor boy, my poor boy!"

"Never mind me, old woman," said the thief, shifting his position a little. "It's enough for me to think of without your putting in."

"But to think of you sitting there, and your poor back burning and throbbing. A curse upon Ralph Campbell, body and soul. May he taste every bitter cup of life. May his friends turn from him in the hour of his need, his rifle fail him every time he pulls the trigger, his children die before his eyes."

"How cruel you are," sobbed Myra. "Surely I never wronged you."

"Go away, unless you would have me curse you as well," screamed Mag. "Because you brought my poor boy water I am not to curse. I'll do more than that, far more, before I'm done with you. I'll remember you for the good you did, and your husband for the evil. Now go."

Myra stole away, fearfully agitated and caught up her boy in her arms, who was still playing upon the doorstep.

"Ay, ay," muttered the vindictive hag. "That is the place to strike and strike home. She'll feel it all the worse and so will he. I hope they ain't broke your spirit, my boy."

"Tain't in them to do that," replied the man, savagely. "Break my spirit—mine! You don't know the cub you have raised if you think that of me. But what's the use to show 'em your hand afore you're sure of the keerds? Time enough for that when the stakes are on the board, and then sweep it clean. There's not a stripe upon my back that won't be the grave of one of the men who stood by and laughed when they beat me like a dog, and on Ralph Campbell my vengeance will fall heavy."

"What do you think to do, my dear boy? Tell your old mother, and let her help you."

"What's the use to talk while I'm anchored by the heels in this way?"

"But tell me; I'm old, but I'm cunning. I can plan yet, as they shall know."

"Sit close to me then, for I wouldn't have the walls hear what I say."

The old hag sat down upon the wooden platform of the stocks and conversed with him in whispers. The sun passed the meridian and began to slope toward the west, and yet the strangely assorted pair kept their places and made their plans. Life and death hung upon their words, and had the passers-by who cast such scornful glances at them, known what they plotted to do, they would have hung both to the nearest tree. But, it was written in the book of fate that on these two should hang the odium of one of the most dreadful massacres which ever stained the pages of history, and they must work it out.

CHAPTER II.

MOTHER AND SON.

At five o'clock Campbell, accompanied by several of the inhabitants of the village, came out and set the prisoner free.

"You will at once proceed to your house and pack up such articles of value as you may wish to remove and get them ready for transportation. Cherry Valley must be unvisited by you again. The brand of crime is on you, and whoever shall meet you within two miles of this township will be justified in shooting you upon the spot. We do this in justice to ourselves."

"I'm glad you've drove me out," said the other, drawing a long breath, as he stood with downcast head before them. "It's your right to do it, and if you make laws, a poor devil must abide by them. How long did you say you'd give me to get out of town?"

"Give him forty-eight hours," said one of the men. "That's little enough."

"It won't take long for me to pack my goods," said the condemned man, in a low voice.

"Don't say anything more; that's all the time I need. Come on, mother; must she go too?"

"Not unless she likes."

"Then I reckon I'll leave her here until I kin send for her. It takes time to build a new house and lay out a clearing, and it mou't be a year afore I could git her away."

He took his march through the woods at a quick, strong pace, his eyes gleaming with a look of intense hate, while Mag turned as they passed into the forest to shake her skinny hand at the village:

"You'll remember this in the days to come, Ralph Campbell. If you don't my name ain't Mag, the Witch. Yah! I hate you."

"Thank you, Mag," replied Ralph, laughing uneasily. "The old fiend is vindictive enough to poison me if she took it into her head to do it. I'm not sure we ought not to send her along with her hopeful son. I wonder who will keep her in food while Tom is away?"

"Let Mag alone for that," replied one of the men. "She can shoot well yet, and I've seen her take a squirrel out of the top of a high tree with a heavy rifle, a shot that some of our youngsters would hardly have thought it a disgrace to miss. Let them go for a couple of mischievous devils, and may we never see Tom Dock-tader's face again."

Mother and son pursued their way through a thick growth of timber until they struck the

creek, where, nestling down in a quiet nook, was a log cabin strongly built, after the fashion of the times, to guard against the sudden attacks of the Indians, who were liable at any time to assail it. Dockstader pushed open the door with his foot and went in, followed by his mother. A black cat, crouching before the rude stone fireplace, rose with a shrill snarl as they entered, and seemed about to fly at them, until the old woman spoke.

"Down, devil, down," cried Mag. "What; don't you know your mistress yet? I'll teach you, if you spit at me."

A wolf-hound, gaunt and strong, simply raised his head and looked at them, and lay down again with a sulky growl.

"You git that 'intment, old woman," hissed Dockstader, as he sunk into a chair. "My back is all cut to pieces. Never mind; a knife digs deeper than a beech-gad, any day."

He stripped off his ragged hunting-shirt and threw it on the floor, and the old woman took down an old bottle, filled with a yellowish ointment, with which she smeared the lacerated back of her son, who called down unheard-of curses upon the man who had been foremost in inflicting his well-deserved punishment upon him. Every touch even of the old woman's careful hand was an agony to him, and, strong man as he was, he moaned like a child in pain, and grew faint as she dressed the wounds and wound great strips of cotton cloth, covered with the ointment, about his naked body. When it was done he felt easier, and lay upon his face on a pile of bearskins in a corner, while she brought out a huge stone bottle and a horn drinking-cup and poured him out nearly a half-pint of fiery brandy, which he drank as if it had been water.

"Git something for me to eat," he said; "I'm off for the Indian nation to-night, and I've no doubt they'll use me well. I've been cute enough never to wrong an Injin, and the critters remember it. I'll have friends enough before a month is out, and don't you be slack in doing the work we've cut out."

"I'm wide awake, my son. Old Mag Dockstader always remembers a promise, and when I told that poison Campbell I'd be even with him, I meant it. He'll believe it, too, before he's much older."

"Don't let 'em know you are thinkin' of it, old woman. Better creep and crawl to git revenge than to be druv out of the kentry afore it's done. They won't do you any harm as long as you keep still."

"You let me alone to work. I'd better cook out a lot of bear-meat and have you carry it with you, hadn't I?"

"Yes; it's a journey to the Injin nation and I ain't fit to hunt."

Mag took an ax and went out into the shed, leaving her hopeful son moaning upon his rough bed. The sound of heavy blows followed, and she came in, carrying a heavy piece of bear-meat upon one arm and some light-wood upon the other. Raking open the coals, she laid the light-wood on them and a bright flame was soon curling up toward the ceiling. Upon this she laid two or three heavy sticks, and the fire was blazing. Then she hung the

meat upon a hook swinging by a heavy chain from the upper part of the chimney, and left it there, while she set out the rude table and put out the wooden plates and platters, ready for the meat when it should be cooked.

"I'll leave you a rifle, old girl," he said. "And if you get short of meat you know how to kill a buck. It cuts me to the heart to be druv out of Cherry Valley now, jist when I was git-ting the hunting-ground by heart."

"I'm sorry you couldn't keep your hands off the horses, Tommy."

"It's my natur'," moaned the thief. "I never could resist a boss, you know, and that brown mare of Ralph Campbell's is such a beauty."

"And then you would go to West Springfield, though I warned you not."

"Who'd 'a' thought of meeting Ralph and Tim Murphy thar of all places in the world? I thought they was up toward the Mohawk, myself, but they come down on me when I was resting and taking a snack, and the first I knew, they had their rifles at my heart and I was took. 'Tain't no use to try to run away from Tim Murphy's rifle; she shoots too durned straight, she does."

"I've got him down in my book too, the red-headed rascal. He shall suffer with the rest."

She gave the meat a whirl and set it spinning at a great rate, while the conversation went on.

"I can't hardly bring myself to hurt Myra," said Dockstader, uneasily. 'Twas kind in her, when every other one shrunk away from me, to come out and give me water. I wish it could be done and not hurt her. I used to think the world of her."

"How are you going to do it and not hurt her, Tommy? She's just bound up in Ralph Campbell and the boy, and if you strike at them you must hit her. If you are fool enough and coward enough to forgit your aching back, say so, and that ends it. It is not for my own good I'm going to do it."

"I know it, mother. Adrat it, you don't think I'm likely to forgit? No, no! If you stood in the way of my revenge, it wouldn't make no difference; I said I'd be even with 'em, and I will."

"That's like my own son," said Mag, approvingly. "Never mind that little white-faced chit, but take your vengeance like a man."

"I mou't lay in wait for Ralph Campbell and shoot him from the bush."

"Yes, an have all Cherry Valley out in chase of you, with Tim Murphy for a trailer. That won't do."

"No, I reckon not. Your plan is the best arter all, and that I'll stick to. Cut me off some of that meat and let the rest cook while I eat."

She cut off some of the roasted meat from the outside and put it on his plate, while he took up the stone bottle and drank freely.

"Ah; that goes to the spot. A man that kin have enough of that stuff to drink is a match for the king. Let Ralph Campbell and all his tribe go down for all I care."

He ate and drank voraciously, while she ate nothing, and busied herself in supplying his wants. There was something redeeming in the fierce love this strange old woman bore her son,

Awkward and ungainly though he was, a villain of the deepest dye, a murderer at heart, yet she loved him with that savage sort of affection which the tigress feels for her whelp. She watched his every movement, and kept cutting off juicy pieces from the roasting meat and putting them on his plate, poured out his liquor, and seemed to take delight in every morsel he took.

"How's your poor back now, Tommy?"

"Better, mother, better. That 'intment is the right sort and it takes right hold. You'd better put that bottle in my knapsack for me, so I kin dress it when the cloth gits dry."

She sprung up and began to pack his knapsack, putting in everything she thought he might need upon the road, and leaving her work now and then to cut off more meat for him. He seemed to appreciate her devotion too, in his rough way.

"I'm afraid you got a cut yourself when you kem between Tim Murphy and me this mornin'," he said.

"I didn't feel it, Tommy. I'd 'a' took them all for your sake. Didn't I offer to take 'em?"

"So you did, old woman," said Tom. "You do think a heap of me, that's a fact. Never you mind; we'll make it even with Ralph Campbell and the rest. You nigh about knifed him as it was."

"Didn't I strike hard and sure, Tommy? He's mighty quick with his hands or it would have gone to his heart; I only wish it had."

"That wouldn't do on no accout, old woman. They'd 'a' strung you up for it, and then I'd 'a' had all the work to do alone, which wouldn't suit me. Thar; we've talked long enough. You finish packing and I'll go and cut some wood."

For some moments the old woman worked away, while the sound of her son's ax came in through the half-open door as he labored away upon the wood. As she worked she crooned out a weird song of elves and ghouls, of witches who sat on the gallows top and perched on the mountain or rode on the rising blast. A strange, unearthly melody, and what was more wonderful still, in a voice of liquid sweetness, totally different from the cracked and shrill tones in which she spoke.

"Yes, yes, yes," she murmured, "blood will have blood and hate will tell its story. I'll have my revenge upon the Campbells, father and son. They little know, ha, ha! who Mag the Witch is, though I wouldn't have the old man know me even now, or he'd understand why it is I hate all who bear the name. Tommy's heart is soft because the girl gave him water to drink. Bah, if she isn't of the Campbell blood, isn't she raising a chief of the hated name? A curse upon them all. I'll stop the name and the race with this generation, if I have to murder them all and die. And yet, the time seems too far off; there was a day when Mag the Witch would have given her life for one of the same proud and cruel race. He is in his grave years ago, and I am Mag the Witch, Mag Dockstader, the wife of the half-breed. Bah!"

The sound of the ax still came through the open door, and the old woman stopped with some little article in her hand which she was about to put into the knapsack.

"And I married the half-breed! What did it

matter to me, since every hope I had was withered and dead. I married him, but little did I think then that I should mourn him dead, or love his child. And such a child as he is! Rough and rude, an outlawed man, with the stripes which law has laid upon his back still burning. Why do I love him so? Because I know that in his veins courses the same unforgiving blood which burns in mine. Because I know that he will stop at nothing, not even blood, for vengeance' sake; and he has been a true son to me."

She stopped in her work, and sitting down upon the floor, took out a little golden locket from some secret place in her dress and touched a spring. It revealed two faces, one that of a young man in the uniform of an officer in the Royal Americans, with a bold, handsome face and a firm lip, and the other a beautiful woman with a glorious face, but with an eye from which smoldering fire seemed to leap out, even in the pictures.

"Thirty years ago," she murmured, touching the face of the man with her lips, "and for you this woman would have dared anything. Now, a wrinkled and withered crone, old before her time, she sits and looks upon your pictured face and wonders that such a change could ever come. Ha! here comes Tommy."

She hid the locket in her dress and was strapping the knapsack when her son entered.

"All ready, old woman?" he said.

"Yes, Tommy, all ready."

He took down a rifle from the wall, with a horn and bullet-pouch, and threw a knapsack over his shoulder. "You keep still for a week, then," he said, "and at three o'clock on Tuesday night come down to the river side, and you shall hear from me. Mebbe I won't come myself, but it don't matter."

She threw her old arm about his neck and just touched his dark cheek with her lips, and he was out in the forest, treading steadily northward in the gathering gloom.

CHAPTER III.

THE MUTE CHIEF.

RALPH CAMPBELL was the nephew of one of the leading pioneers in Central New York. He had been offered a commission in the previous year, but had steadily refused it, preferring to work upon his many acres and help build up the country of his choice. No part of the great State in which we live can claim greater beauty than that portion which lies south of the central chain of lakes. A glorious country, hemmed in by low mountains, and in the center of the beautiful valley, at the head-waters of the Susquehanna, lay the beautiful village of Cherry Valley. At the time of the settlement, the valley was filled with groves of wild cherries, then in full bloom, and Dunlop, one of the pioneers, pointing to them, exclaimed: "Let us give our place an appropriate name." And they called it, "Cherry Valley."

Ralph Campbell, with the powerful aid of his uncle, became one of the most promising men of the valley. Knowing as he did that a knowledge of woodcraft is necessary in a country like this, he had taken lessons in that art from Tim Murphy, than whom no one was better able to

give instruction. This strange man had early taken up the life of a hunter and scout, and though still retaining his many peculiarities was known far and near for his great gifts. Possessing a powerful frame, swift of foot, quick of eye and hand, and a dead shot, he was the beau ideal of the forest man.

Four days after the punishment and banishment of Dockstader, Tim came in from a hunt. He appeared ill at ease and muttered to himself as he walked along, and Ralph could not help noticing it.

"What is the matter with you, Tim? You look downcast."

"That I am," he said. "I've been speaking with that born devil, Mag the Witch."

"Pshaw! what do you care for her?"

"Yes; but she's been tellin' my fortune," replied Tim, "although I asked her not, and you may just bet it was the worst fortune I ever had told me. 'Fire can't burn you, or water drown,' she sez; 'but your death is the cord an' tree:' think of that, Ralph; me to hang! By jinks, I don't like it; you may say what you like, but I don't like it."

"Is that all?"

"That's enough, I should say. But that ain't all. She told me that you, and all your fam'ly, would be under the sod in a matter of four days."

"Nonsense; I never was in better health in my life, as far as I am concerned, and Myra and the boy look healthy enough. Look at this fellow," he said, catching up the beautiful boy, as he was running past him. "What do you say to him?"

"He's a fine lad; there ain't a better in the colony. But, I'm nat'rally superstitious, and the old hag's words seemed to come from her heart."

"So they might. If she had her way, we would all die this hour, for driving her hopeful son out of the colony. A good riddance, I say, and I'll deal out the like punishment to every horse-thief I can catch, you may swear to that."

At this moment, Mag appeared at the entrance to the main street, and came slowly toward them. Her form seemed more erect, and her eyes had a brighter gleam as she saw the objects of her hatred; and she quickened her pace.

"Good-day, Mag," said Ralph. "I hope you are well."

"It was a black day in which I ever saw the face of a Campbell," replied Mag. "You let me alone to go my way and do my work. Time will show whether you, the descendant of an old house, the strong young man and leader of men, can be a match for the despised Mag the Witch, as fools call me."

The sound of a merry song was heard, and Myra came out upon the steps, but her sweet voice was hushed and her eyes fell, as she saw the malevolent glance of the old woman fixed upon her face.

"Young and happy, young and happy," she muttered. "Let me tell your fortune, I, who can read the signs of the past and the future upon the open palm. I have the gift of second sight, and looking at your face, I read there a terrible danger hanging over your head. A danger so great and sudden that you can not avert it. I seem to hear the tolling bell which

rings out for the dead, and I see you lying in your coffin."

"Hag," shouted Ralph, as he saw his wife turn deadly pale and tremble. "Dare to speak in that way again, and try to terrify my wife, and I will have you sent after your villainous son."

"Little cares Mag the Witch for any thing which *you* can do," she answered, boldly. "Lay a hand on me, and you are dead. See; this knife I hold is poisoned. The slightest touch, enough to raise the skin and draw blood upon you, and you will trouble me no more."

She held in her hand a long, thin knife, with a blade which glittered like silver in the sun-rays. About an inch of the point was stained with some dark, glutinous substance, at which Mag looked with a bitter laugh, while Myra seized her husband's arm and drew him back.

"For heaven's sake, Ralph, do not make her angry. Go away, Mrs. Dockstader, if you have any pity."

"I have none, none for the Campbell blood. Stand back, Ralph Campbell, and listen to the words I have to say. You have driven my son away and left me alone, an old woman in my solitary home, with no companions except a wolf-hound, a cat, and my own thoughts. Do you wonder that those thoughts are sometimes bitter? You have done this, and sooner or later I will have my revenge."

She turned hastily away, just as a party of Indians came into the village, walking in the midst of the street and looking about them with quick, searching glances. One of them was an old man, with a face of surpassing ugliness, and a deformed back, and the other, a repulsive-looking warrior of middle age, painted in fantastic colors. A child, not more than ten years old, followed them, carrying in his hand a miniature bow and arrow, and dressed in a gaudy robe of wolf-skin. Little Ralph was attracted by the appearance of this young savage, and pointed him out to his father.

"Let me see him shoot, father. Won't you ask him to let me see him shoot?"

"I know that chief, Tim," said Ralph, in an uneasy tone. "It is Neadawa, the Mute Chief. What is he doing here?"

"It's a long path to the Mohawk lodges," replied Tim, "and the Mute Chief never makes long journeys for nothing. I don't understand it, myself, nor what should bring the medicine-man with him."

"I will speak to Neadawa," replied Ralph. "You must know that the times are ominous, and in the event of war, the Mohawks will be our enemies. Go into the house, Myra, and take Ralph with you."

But little Ralph objected strenuously to this, and begged so hard, that his mother allowed him to remain.

Neadawa advanced, and came to a halt just in front of Campbell, looking at him with a stolid, unwavering attention, his eyes cold and hard as steel. He was a powerful fellow, in the dress of a Mohawk warrior of high rank, with the totem of his tribe marked in India ink upon his naked breast. The old man had a keen, cunning eye, which twinkled and danced as he gazed, in a remarkable manner.

"Neadawa is very welcome here," said Ralph, extending his hand. "The Mohawks are always welcome to the lodges of their white brothers."

Neadawa simply inclined his head, still looking steadily at the speaker. Then, turning to the old Indian, he wreathed his fingers together after the manner of mutes, with a rapid motion which it was almost impossible to follow.

"What does he say?" demanded Ralph turning to the medicine-man.

"He says that the words of Campbell sink into his heart, and he will gladly accept the hospitality of his brother, and remember it," replied the medicine-man.

"Is Neadawa hungry?" said Campbell.

The Mute Chief inclined his head.

"Then let him enter the house and take food. Our doors are always open to the Mohawks, while we are friends. Who is the boy?"

"He is the son of Neadawa, and we are teaching him how to become a chief."

"Let him stay with my little boy and take care of him. Perhaps he would show my son how he can shoot when we are gone."

The medicine-man said a few words in the Indian language to the boy, and he remained at the door, stringing his bow for a shot, and nodding to little Ralph, who was in ecstasies at the hope of seeing him shoot. Neadawa followed Campbell into the house, and Tim sat down upon the steps to watch the two boys.

"Now what brought them Injins here, that's what I want to know? The Mute Chief ain't no friend to us, that I know. Seein' that he ain't, bu'st me if I understand what call he has to be here at all."

Ralph left the two Indians together while he went out and spoke to Myra and asked her to prepare some food for the visitors. While he was gone, the hands of Neadawa were busy, wreathing out short sentences, to which the other replied in an undertone. Their keen eyes roved about the room with unusual interest, taking in every object. When Ralph returned he found them sitting erect upon chairs which had been placed for them, looking at each other in silence. Ralph called them out into the kitchen and placed food before them, of which they partook but sparingly.

"It is a long road to the Mohawk villages," said Ralph. "Why are my brothers here?"

"The country is open for the Mohawk to walk in; he will go where he likes," said the medicine-man, interpreting for Neadawa.

"Certainly. The white men are always glad when their red friends come to visit them. Let Neadawa rest in our lodges."

"The country is ours," said the other. "When the Lenni Lenape were a great tribe, they dwelt here and hunted beside the pleasant river. But the Lenni Lenape are no more; not a man lives of the great tribe of the Tortoise, and if the white man had his way, the wings of the Mohawk Eagle would be clipped so that he could not fly. Neadawa comes, but not in love. He comes to see wherein lies the power of the great race of the white man, and to study how his people may be like them."

"I will teach you how," replied Ralph. "Learn to know that in peace, not in war, lies

the strength of a great nation. Live upon the soil as we do, and plant corn and wheat—"

Neadawa uttered a terrible cry and bounded to his feet, with his hand upon his hatchet, which he half-drew from his belt. His face was so terrible in its expression that Campbell nerved himself for a great struggle, and Tim Murphy ran in with a drawn knife. But the old Mohawk flashed a single sentence at the Mute Chief from his quick fingers, so quick that the others had no conception of it, and the face of the chief sunk into calm.

"He was very angry," said the medicine-man, "because you thought he would work like a woman in a cornfield. Never insult him by that thought again, or he will kill you."

Campbell said nothing more, but told Tim to give the boy some food.

"Ralph has done that already," said Tim. "He's taken a mighty great fancy to the Indian, and laughs every time he hits the white in the target. He ain't hungry now."

"That is all right," said Ralph. "Go and find the colonel and ask him to come down here. He has wanted to see some chief of the Six Nations for a long time, and I have promised to call him. You would be glad to see him, would you not, Neadawa?"

The mute fingers said:

"Let the gray hair come; he is welcome."

Colonel Campbell came down immediately, and held a long talk with Neadawa through the medium of the medicine-man. He found the chief very stubborn, too apt to dwell upon old grievances and to repine because so many white men lived upon the soil whereon he had been bred.

Neadawa was a mystery to many along that border. Even among the Mohawks he was spoken of mysteriously, and no one could tell his lineage. Since he had been among them he had steadily fought his way up, by bravery in war, to a secondary rank among the war-chiefs of that powerful tribe in which he claimed a home. How he became dumb, whether by nature or by some cruel act or shock, no one knew, not even the Mohawks. He came and went like a shadow, being often absent from the village for months, when he would come back as silently as he went, bringing scalps and spoils. At length, from the Hudson on the east to Niagara on the west, from the great lakes to Pennsylvania, he became known and feared. He always came attended by the same henchman, known among the whites as Whistling Wind, who interpreted his speeches.

"I can't say that I really like the way in which the fellow talks," said the elder Campbell, who was the acknowledged head of the settlement. "Is he worth the trouble of conciliation?"

"Decidedly; there is but one who is more to be feared."

"And that one?"

"Joseph Brant."

"I understand you, and will acknowledge that Brant has power, and has learned a great deal under the fostering care of Sir William. As for this man, since you think it worth our while, I will make much of him. Perhaps I had better invite him to my house."

"As you like about that, although I hardly think he will stay over night in the village. I have heard that even when at home he spends his nights in the woods, apart from all companionship."

When asked the question, whether he would stay, the Indian shook his head.

"He will not rest beneath a white man's roof in Cherry Valley," said Whistling Wind, watching his rapid finger. "The woods are his defense by day or night. Under the branches he will sleep, under the branches die. The sweet water will sing near him, making sweet music as he lies asleep, with his dog and gun beside him."

"Have you heard that there is talk of digging up the hatchet against us on the part of England?"

"I have heard it," replied Whistling Wind, looking at Neadawa's fingers.

"What do you think of it?"

"If I had a child and it would not obey me when I spoke, I would beat it with rods. You are the children of the great English father, and if you are wicked he will whip you."

"And the Indians?"

"They are dutiful children," replied Whistling Wind. "They will help the great king."

"I thought so," muttered Ralph. "A curse upon them, how they will harry our exposed towns when the strife comes. Must you go, chief?"

"Neadawa will go."

"Will you come again?"

"Ask the wind: I cannot tell. Do not look for me, for when I come it may not be in peace."

"They stalked proudly out and found the young Indian and Ralph conversing by signs as well as they could. Evidently fast friends already. The young Mohawk had made Ralph a present of his bow, and was giving him lessons in its use, and the little fellow was really making good progress, and was sadly put out when Neadawa signed to his son to follow. Accustomed to implicit obedience, the boy touched the forehead of Ralph with his own in a tender way, and followed his father, looking back from time to time before the forest hid them from view. Scarcely were they out of sight when Tim Murphy appeared, walking at a quick pace with his rifle slung across his arm and his pistols in his belt. He too plunged into the woods and followed the trail of the Indians, who had moved off toward the river, and when he came in sight of Mag's cabin he could see them standing in a group before the door and Mag was talking with them. All at once the chief raised his head and pointed toward the bushes where Tim lay concealed.

He saw Mag make a gesture of fury and rush into the house, from which she emerged the moment after followed by a huge wolf-hound.

"Seek him," he heard her say, and the dog immediately began a circuit, widening it more and more as he proceeded, and Tim immediately began to retreat. The dog was of tremendous strength, and few men would have liked to have a struggle with him. Tim's rifle was loaded, and he threw it forward ready for action, just as the dog broke through the

bushes in front. Undecided for a moment, and not wishing to kill a valuable dog if he could help it, Tim tried his voice upon the animal, and he wavered, but the shrill voice of Mag cried, "Take him, Blood!" The dog uttered a fierce snarl, and sprung at him so suddenly that Tim could take no aim, and fired almost at random. The next moment the paws of the huge brute were upon his shoulders, and his distended jaws within a foot of his face. Tim made a dash at his throat with his left hand even while he drew his knife, and the two rolled to the earth together, the powerful left hand of Murphy wreathed in the loose skin upon the dog's neck, while the huge brute made almost superhuman efforts to free himself. After a desperate trial of strength, Tim managed to free his knife and struck two heavy blows, and he felt the warm blood spurt out into his very face, and the struggles of the dog were over. Just then Mag hurried to the spot, in time to see the wolf-hound lying dead upon the sod, and Tim wiping the blood from his knife upon his shaggy hair. In her first rage the old woman flew at him with the utmost fury, fastening her long fingers in his throat, but Tim shook her off with an angry exclamation.

"You have killed my dog!" she screamed.

"Have I? Then what call had you to set your dog on an old hunter? I heard you, old woman, when you sung out, 'Take him, Blood.' Sounds kind o' friendly, don't it?"

"You lie, you scoundrel! You want an excuse to kill my dog, and I'll have your blood for it!"

"Oh, git out, Mag. Have my blood? You won't have anybody's blood, you won't; so don't think it. You set your dog on me and I killed him, and you know your dog well enough to be sart'in that it's either him or me that had to go."

"Coward, to rob an old woman of her only guard!"

"Seems to me he ain't your only guard. What is Neadawa and Whistling Wind doing at your cabin?"

"If they choose to stop a moment, who have a better right than the owners of the soil?"

"Old habit is strong, Mag. Now you know right well that Jake Dockstader wa'n't a handsome fellow, nor the best man upon the face of the airth, and that he had the same cussed hankering arter the red heathen—and I know why."

"You do!"

"Bet your life, I do. Mixed blood, you know, will have a leaning one way or the other."

"What do you mean by mixed blood, you lying thief! Who has mixed blood?"

"Oh, pshaw; jest as if you didn't know that, critter. Jake Dockstader was a half-breed Mohawk, and nobody knows it better than you do. Consekently your son come by his knavish tricks honest enuff, he did."

"Have you told this to any one?" she said, after a pause. "Nobody knew my husband among all who came to Cherry Valley except you."

"I ain't got any call to tell it everywhere; I'm not a blower. But you git out of the way, for I'm going down to the cabin to see that

every thing is right. I've got my suspicions of you, I allow, and I won't feel easy until I work 'em out."

"You will go to the cabin?" she hissed.

"I must, Mag; git out of the way."

"I warn you not; it won't be safe for you if you try it."

"Why not? You don't think I'm afraid of your claws, old woman."

"I don't know whether you are or not, but I warn you to be careful, and go back to the village."

"I'll see you funder fu'st."

Crash! A heavy blow from an invisible hand descended on his head, and he lay senseless at the feet of his arch-enemy.

CHAPTER IV.

TIM A PRISONER.

WHEN Tim's consciousness returned he was lying bound in some place so dark, that when he raised his hand before his face he could not see it. Where he was he could not tell, but his head was throbbing with pain, and the blood was running down his face. Whoever it might have been who struck him, he had given a terrible blow, and for the time had robbed those strong-knit sinews of their strength, and he lay helpless, trying to study out the secret of his position. His feet were firmly bound, and although he could raise his hands to his face, he felt that they were confined at the wrist by strong cords. Tim lay quiet waiting for his strength to come back. He could hear a muffled sound over his head as of some persons engaged in conversation, but could not make out any thing they said. Soon after a gleam of light broke in upon him as he lay, a door was opened, and Mag, holding a lighted candle in her hand, came slowly down the steps. She had a platter in one hand containing a loaf of coarse bread, some venison steaks, and a pitcher of water, and regarded the prisoner with a malevolent eye.

"So it was your work, old woman," said the hunter, looking at her fiercely. "All right; one of these days I will be even with you."

"Your one of these days may never come to you, my fine boy," replied Mag. "You don't think I mean to let you go free?—not quite such a fool as that, I hope."

"You'd better let me go. What do you mean by it, you old hag?"

"Good names, good names, my master, unless you wish your imprisonment to come to an ending you haven't bargained for."

"In what way?"

She drew her forefinger across her throat with a savage leer which he was not slow to understand.

"You mean to say that you will cut my throat?"

"Precisely; it will take but a few more insults upon your part to make me do it. My fingers itch for it now, and I should like to catch you by the neck and choke your life out."

The bloodthirsty old hag actually opened and shut her fingers as if she held him in her grasp, with that demoniac look still upon her face.

"I believe you would do it," muttered Tim.

"Now look here: I'm a man as ready to face

death as any man alive, and if it is my fate to die here, I'm ready to do it. Curse you, why do you look at me in that way? Do your worst, for I defy you."

"Perhaps I can make you sing in a lower key than that, Master Murphy. If it were my cue to kill you now, I wouldn't wait long, for I hate you because yours was the hand to lay the bloody stripes upon the back of my son."

"I'd do the same again. Come; how do you like that? If it was to do over again, I'd give him eighty lashes instead of thirty-nine."

"Take care; you'll drive me to it if you don't look out," she screamed.

"I don't care. It's but little mercy I expect from you at any rate, and you won't do any worse than kill me. But if I *do* get loose, old wretch, I pity your bones."

Mag gave utterance to a cackling laugh, and set down the dish before him.

"There, eat, eat. I won't starve even the man I mean to kill. I'll leave the candle for you."

She went out, and Tim sat up and looked hard at the provisions. There was something in the look of the old woman which made him suspicious, and he took up the loaf and broke it, applying it to his nostrils instead of his mouth. "It would be just like her to p'izon it," muttered Tim, "and by the eternal she *has*. I kin smell it, if I kain't see it. No, no, old lady; I ain't a-goin' to taste *your* fodder, I ain't."

He broke up the bread, and digging a hole in the soft earth upon which he lay, put part of it, together with the meat, of which he dared not taste, into the hole, and covered it up. When Mag came down half an hour after, she found the half-demolished fragments of the loaf lying upon the tray, the venison gone, and the pitcher half empty. He was lying partly upon his face, moaning feebly, apparently in great pain.

"What is the matter with you?" she said. "You don't look well."

"No more I ain't," he said. "That fodder of yours don't seem to agree with me somehow, and it leaves a mighty queer taste in my mouth. I wish you'd git some fresh water. That in the pitcher don't seem to be right, somehow."

"Ain't well, you say?" said Mag, in devilish glee. "Oh, yes, I'll get some fresh water; I'll do that much for you *now*."

She took the pitcher, poured out the contents, and went to a spring in the corner of the cellar, where she rinsed the pitcher carefully and brought it back to him, and he drank freely.

"That's something like it. I seemed to be burning up inside. There's the pain again. Mag, you've done something with that grub."

"No, I haven't done anything of the kind. Don't be a baby because you've got a colic; any one is liable to that."

"Never had a colic act this way afore," groaned Tim. "Oh Lord, how it does hurt! If you've put anything into that bread to finish me, the Lord forgive you for it."

"I'll go up and get you some brandy," she said. "I never did see just such a man as you are to make a fuss about a trifle. If you don't beat all the men. Are you any worse?"

"Worse all the time. Oh, what a pain it is! Can't you do something for me, Mag?—I feel as

if I should go crazy, tied up as I am. If I could only move about it wouldn't help me."

Mag took up the light and ran out of the cellar. The two Indians were sitting in the room above, for it was in the cellar of the cabin in which Mag lived that Tim was confined. They looked at her inquiringly.

"It is done," she said. "He will never see another sunrise."

Neadawa made a gesture of delight, and sprang up as if he would go into the cellar. But Mag restrained him.

"Don't you go down," she said. "Tis not of use for you to see him, and I'm right sorry to have to do it. Before they tied my son up and whipped him, Tim wasn't a bad fellow, and did me many a good turn. Let him die, since die he must, but let him die alone."

"How long will it be?" said the medicine-man, who had not spoken.

"In a hour he will be dead."

"Good," said the other. "We will wait."

He sat down again, and all three seemed to listen for the sound which came from below. Muffled cries could be heard from time to time, as of a man in agony, and whenever he heard these Neadawa started, and cast a quick look at the immovable face of Mag, who sat with a half-smile upon her lips, waiting for the death.

"Ugh," said the medicine-man, turning to Neadawa. "This woman should have been a warrior, for she has the heart of a great brave."

Neadawa flashed an answer back from his quick fingers, at which his companion nodded. But the chief was evidently ill at ease, and kept his eyes fixed upon the floor, listening to every sound. Though a mute, his sense of hearing was preternaturally acute, and he seemed to hear the slightest sound.

"Where is the boy?" demanded Mag. "Do you mean to have him see it when we bring it out?"

Neadawa shook his head, and rising, went out and found the boy, who was sitting upon a log near the door. Neadawa touched him on the shoulder and gave some order through his medium of speech, and the boy rose and went down to the river side, out of sight of the house, when Neadawa returned. At this moment a terrible cry rung through the house, and then all was still.

"That is the end," said Mag. "Let us go to him."

She opened the door which led to the cellar, and placed a stool behind it so that it could not close again, and then held the light while they went down. Neadawa saw Tim Murphy lying upon his face, his eyes staring wide open, and foam running out of his mouth. They turned him over and the medicine-man lifted his hand, which dropped like lead, and they were sure that he was dead, though the body was yet warm.

"So perish all the enemies of Mag the Witch," she said, in a voice of savage intentness. "Bring him out, into the air, and let us make him a grave."

No bonds were needed now. A stronger band than man could make held the brave hunter now, and they cut the cords upon his muscular hands

and feet, and lifting the yet warm body, carried it up the stairs and into the open air. It was growing dark now, and Mag led the way down a forest path toward the river, though not toward the place where the boy was sitting. Close to the river side was a growth of wild cherries in a sandy soil, and here the Indian laid the body down, and Neadawa, taking the spade which Mag had brought, began to scoop out a shallow grave. The others helped him, one with a hatchet and the other with a sharp stick, loosening the soil that he might dig it out. While they labored, all three were startled by a wild laugh, and looked about in dismay.

"Who is that?" whispered Mag. "What noise is that?"

"Murderers!" cried a hollow voice. "Prepare to meet your doom."

With one accord, stopping for nothing, they fled away, leaving the body lying by the shallow grave which they had dug. With wild eyes and pale faces they ran, hardly looking behind them until they had gone some hundred yards from the place, when all stopped at the voice of Mag.

"We are fools," she said. "If this voice was nothing earthly, what have we to fear? If it was mortal, I must know who it is, or my doom is sealed. Come back unless you would have a woman shame you for your cowardice, for I will go alone."

Their first fright over, they followed her quickly, and reached the place where the grave was dug. They found the grave and spade as they had left it, but the body was gone.

"May the blight fall upon the man who has done this," screamed Mag. "We are outwitted, fooled, made a mock of."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked a voice close at hand. "A grave without a body! A walking corpse. Ha, ha, ha!"

Neadawa caught up his hatchet and ran hastily in the direction in which the voice was heard, followed by the medicine-man and Mag. The fierce old woman had drawn the knife with which she had threatened Ralph Campbell, and bounded along with a strength and vigor hardly to be looked for in one so old. But the darkness was gathering fast about them, and they stumbled over sticks and stones, until they heard the same hollow laugh in the direction of the cabin, and Mag actually screamed aloud in her rage, and turned toward her house. When they reached it a bright glow shone from the windows, greater than the light of the fireplace could produce, and then a flood of flame shot out at the latticed window and the whole place was in a blaze. Mag threw herself down upon the earth and sobbed like a child.

"Fate is against me and will not let me have revenge. Fools that we were, thrice doubled fools, to carry him out until we were sure he was dead. He never touched the poison."

"Bet your life he didn't," cried the voice of Tim Murphy from the woods. "No such fool. Good-by, old gal. Take care of yourself until we meet again."

A few words will explain the phenomena of Tim's sudden resuscitation. He had been "shamming Abraham," as the slang phrase has it, and being something of a ventriloquist, had

been enabled readily to put his enemies to flight. Then after drawing them off into the woods he had doubled on his tracks and set fire to the cabin, and Mag the witch was houseless, homeless, in the great forest. Though she had deserved this for her crimes, let us own that:

"It was a trying moment that, which found her,
Standing alone beside her desolate hearth,
Where all her household gods lay shattered round
her."

This wicked old woman loved her home. In it she had spent her happiest hours, if they could be called happy, listening while her son recounted the evil deeds he had done, and laughed over the rage of those he had victimized. Now, in a few moments that humble roof would be but a charred and blackened mass of ruins. The Indians did not speak, but stood silently regarding the ruins.

"Another wrong to avenge," said Mag. "Another entry in the record of my hate."

"It is good," said the medicine-man. "My mother will have many things to remember. Let her not forget that we are here to give her that revenge she seeks."

"To-night; shall it be to-night?"

"To-night if you wish; what care we?"

"I wish it to be at once, and the quicker the better. I can stay here no longer, for Tim Murphy will give me no rest. Let us do the work we have before us, and at once."

CHAPTER V.

THE TERRIBLE BLOW.

RALPH CAMPBELL and his family were at rest, sleeping the sleep of the just. The village was quiet, and not a sound save the murmur of the night-wind through the bending boughs, could be heard. The houses were all closed for the night and not a light gleamed in the whole village, nor was there a watchman in the streets. In the thick darkness there stole through the silent street three figures, moving on like ghosts, steadily, with silent feet, as if they trod on air. Now and then they paused and laid themselves prostrate upon the earth to listen, and then went forward stooping, with the decided movement of men who knew what they meant to do, and how to do it.

Through the narrow street they went until they reached Campbell's house, which stood a little apart from the rest, in a grove of young trees. They stole round to the rear of the house, when the leader raised his hand as a signal for caution, and pointed to the shutter of the window. The small figure in the cloak thrust a hand into an aperture cut in the glass, and pulled out the bolt, swinging the window back to its full stretch, and they stole on until they reached an open door. Upon the table a lamp burned dimly, but enough to light up the scene. Upon a bed in one corner lay Ralph and Myra Campbell, sleeping.

In a crib between the door and the bed lay little Ralph, with the bow which Neadawa's son had given him, sleeping sweetly, with a smile upon his innocent young face.

Silent as specters the three stole in and approached the bed of their victims. The figure in the cloak glided to the bedside and looked

down upon them. Then, with quick fingers, the intruders made two gags by wrapping a handkerchief about the middle of a short stick, and thrust them into the mouths of the sleeping pair. Ralph awoke instantly, but only to find his mouth stopped by the gag, while Myra, springing up, was clinched by the throat and passed at once into a swoon from fright and horror. Then the cloak dropped to the floor, and revealed the sallow face and bent form of Mag, the Witch.

"Aha!" she whispered, in a blood-curdling tone. "I told you that my turn would come. Do not lift your hand to the gag, for as surely as you do you are dead. I have come to take revenge upon you for the injury you did to my son when he was helpless in your hands. A woman who has the courage of a man can do much for the sake of those she loves, and even I, Mag the Witch, decrepit, old, worn out, have studied out this plan. Bring the boy here, Neadawa."

The Mute, for indeed it was the silent chief, brought the sleeping boy in his arms and put him in a chair near the bed. Mag sat down beside him, laid his head in her lap and allowed the hand which held the dagger to rest upon his breast.

"Before we remove the gags, for I want to hear you beg for mercy, let me say to you that if you raise your voice above the ordinary conversational tone I will bury this dagger in the boy's heart. Take the gag from his mouth, Neadawa."

The chief complied, and Ralph partly raised himself in bed and looked at her, his eyes full of nameless terror.

"To-day my house is in ruins, Ralph Campbell," she said. "And your myrmidon, Tim Murphy, is the man who is guilty of the great crime of turning an old woman houseless into the forest."

"Do you blame him for that? Did you not try to take his life?" said Ralph.

"So he told you that, and doubtless laughed when he told you how he outwitted the old woman. Well, his time will come, too, and he shall repent. Do you know why I sought his life? Because he is the man who lashed my son, by your orders, and because to-day he killed my dog, the only guard I had."

Just then the eyes of the young wife unclosed. As she saw the dark faces clustered about the bed she would have cried out, but the cruel gag prevented her. She put her hand to her mouth to drag it away, but Neadawa stopped her with his strong hand.

"Tell her that if she makes a sound without my permission it will be death to the boy," cried the fierce old hag. "Now remove the gag, Neadawa."

The Indian put out his long arm and tore off the handkerchief.

"You must come with us. Neadawa, you can go into the hall and wait. Ralph Campbell, arise, and dress yourself, and let your wife do the same."

She rose, still holding the boy in her arms, and moved her chair to the other side of the room. Neadawa hesitated, and she made him a quick signal.

The two Indians left the room and the unfor-

fortunate couple rose and dressed hastily, while Mag sat as immovable as a stone image with the knife ready for a blow.

When they were dressed she called in the Indians, and Ralph and Myra were again gagged and their hands tied behind them, and in this situation were forced to walk out of the house.

Through the silent village that strange party made their way, the Indians walking on either side, and Mag bringing up the rear, still holding the boy in her arms.

"You are to make no attempt to escape," Mag had said, when they started. "If you do, you know the result will be fatal to this boy."

On they went, leaving the village behind them, until they stood in the open space in front of the ruined house where Mag had lived so long. The fire was still burning and flashing a lurid light about the little opening. Ralph was bound to a tree and the gag removed, and Mag set the boy down, who was by this time wide awake.

"Why have we been brought here?" said Ralph.

"You will know that soon enough," replied Mag, with a look of sinister meaning. "Where is your boy, Neadawa? It is better, if he is to be trained as a warrior, that he should see how we punish those of the hated race."

Neadawa produced a small whistle which he applied to his mouth and blew a shrill blast. The next moment the boy appeared from his station beside the river, which, young as he was, he would not leave until he received orders to the contrary.

Now let us to work. Whistling Wind, you will take charge of the lady and see that she does not interrupt us, and the less trouble she makes the better for the boy. Untie him."

The bonds were removed from the hands of Campbell, and he was taken from the tree.

"Take off your coat."

"What do you mean to do?"

"Bring the boy to me, Whistling Wind. I see that my dear friend is going to make trouble."

Ralph, without another word, threw off his coat and pulled his arms out of his shirt, and let it drop about his waist. He understood now the refinement of vengeance upon the part of Mag, and determined to bear it as well as he could, sooner than leave his boy in danger. He was again tied, with his face to the tree, while Myra struggled vainly in the strong arms of Whistling Wind.

"Do your work, you she-devil, and say no more about it."

"Don't hurry me, please," replied Mag. "I never could bear to be hurried, you know. Are you bringing those whips, Neadawa?"

The Indian appeared, carrying in his hands a bundle of beech rods, similar to those with which Tom Dockstader had been flogged. For the first time the Mute Chief began to show signs of pleasure in the work. His eyes sparkled, and he looked gloatingly at the exposed back of the bound man, and handled the rods as if he longed to use them.

"Why don't you beg for mercy, you?" cried Mag. "Why don't you ask me to let you go? Ah, you saw the blood run down my son's poor

back and were pleased. Let us see how you will like it yourself. What is it, Neadawa?"

The chief made a quick signal with his finger.

"You want to do the whipping?"

Neadawa nodded assent.

"I'm afraid you won't do him justice. I hate him so that I think nobody could lay it on as I will."

The chief shook his head, and again moved his fingers quickly.

"Well, I'll give you half the work, because you have been of great service to me. You shall take the last half."

With a delighted face the dark savage selected a strong rod, and gave it into her hand, and she took her station, raising the rod high above her head. In a frenzy of rage she struck, screaming as he had done when her son was punished:

"One!"

There was something terrible in the vindictive strength of this fiend. The strongest man could not have used the whip with greater effect. Ralph set his teeth hard, and for the first ten lashes bore it without a moan, though ridges were rising over his delicate skin, white and smooth as a woman's. Every blow wrung a cry of agony from Myra, although not from him. She seemed to feel the cruel blows upon her own flesh, and when the arm of Mag fell exhausted to her side after the thirtieth blow, she ran to her and caught her by the arm.

"Go. Vindictive old wretch, there will come a time when the evil of your ill-spent life will find you out. As you have lived without pity, so you will die, accursed by every being on the earth. May the son for whose sake you have done this, turn his hand against you when you die, and may you taste, as I do, the most bitter agony which hate can give."

Mag said not a word, but stood with demoniac glee imprinted upon her face, looking down upon the wreck her hand had made.

CHAPTER VI.

LOST!

THEY found the couple lying on the sod next morning in front of the town. Ralph was bruised and gory, with a scarred and bloody back, and bound hand and foot. It was the same with Myra in regard to bonds, though but one blow had been struck her. Their captors had conveyed them back thus near the village, and there left them until morning should come. The villagers took up the senseless forms with tender hands and carried them into the town, while the doctor was called in to attend to Ralph's injuries. When they removed his clothing, and saw the marks of the terrible rods, they partly understood what has been done, and Tim Murphy uttered a perfect yell of rage.

"Here you, Frazier, Nesbitt and Fry, you git your rifles and come along o' me. It's come to a mighty nice pass when housen ar' broken into by night, and men and wimmen taken out and whipped. We kain't do no good here, so let's gi to work."

"Who do you think did it, Tim?" asked the man called Frazier.

"I can't rightly say that I know jest who did it, but this yer I do know, that Mag the Witch

is at the bottom of it. I'll hunt her down; you take my word for it. I'll hunt her down if it takes five years. Yes, I will. Now you come along."

The four men armed themselves, and left the house with hurried steps and took their way through the woods in the direction of the ruined cabin of Mag the Witch, scarcely hoping to find her there, and yet not quite certain but that her natural spirit of bravado might prompt her to stay. But her last act had frightened even her, and they found no sign of her presence.

"They've took to the canoe to break the trail," said Tim. "That won't do the work, as she'll find afore she's done with me."

"What can you do, Tim?"

"Don't I know whar she'll travel to? Wasn't Jake Dockstader a half-breed Mohawk? Stands to reason, then, now that she's turned savage, that she'll make a break for the Mohawk lodges to be taken keer of. I sort of opinionate that Tom Dockstader is thar himself."

"You don't think that?"

"Ain't he a wolf, nat'rally curse him? Ain't his mother a she-devil, and don't they take to the Mohawks as nat'rally as a baby to milk? I wouldn't make no more of puttin' a bullet through that pesky old hag than if she war a turkey-buzzard."

He tapped his rifle significantly, and they understood him. Woe to Tom Dockstader if he ever came within reach of that mighty and unerring weapon. Tim's rifle was in itself peculiar. Few men would have liked to carry the ponderous weapon upon a long march. It was not only a double-barreled gun—a thing seldom seen in those days—but it had barrels of tremendous length, and in his hand fatal to all against whom it was lifted.

They hurried back to the house, and found that Myra had not yet awakened from her swoon, but lay pale as marble, her pallid lips just parted a little, while her bosom barely seemed to heave.

Two or three ladies were laboring to arouse Myra from her deathlike trance, but with little effect. Ralph had been removed to another room, for he had recovered enough to understand them, but he was badly hurt, and the blood with which his hair was matted, flowed from a terrible cut in his head, evidently the work of an Indian hatchet. They dressed his wounded back as well as they could, but when the doctor touched the wound upon his head, he uttered a wild cry and started up in bed.

"Lie down again, Ralph," said the doctor, putting a firm hand upon his breast. "What do you mean by this, sir?"

"Why have you taken me out of my grave?" demanded Ralph, in a wild tone. "We were sleeping so sweetly there, Myra and I. No one has the right to disturb us in the place of our rest."

"Hush, Ralph; you must not disturb yourself, by talking in that way."

"A wild night, ha! ha!" cried Ralph. "A wild night, and a dark—under the bending boughs. What is this upon my head? Blood! blood; did I not tell you so when you would drag me out of my grave? Where is Myra? They have taken her away!"

"Not at all. Drink this and you will feel better."

"Do you think to fool me with your poisoned drink? Hurrah! the dead are wise, and mortals cannot hope to cheat them. Hush!" he added, in a blood-chilling whisper. "I've been among the dead, deep down under the grassy sod, in the caverns full of dead men's bones. Merrily they live, under the earth, drinking from skulls the fiery blood. Let me go to them. Ha! ha!"

"They drink out of skulls newly-torn from the grave."

Dancing round them pale specters are seen. Their liquor is blood, and this horrible stave They howl: 'Ha! ha! ha!—a merry life it is.'"

"This is fearful," whispered the doctor, turning to Judge Campbell, who was in the room. "I fear that this blow has turned his brain, and unless I can get him quiet long enough to examine his wound, nothing can be done for him. Go out, all of you, and let me see what I can do."

They went out, leaving them together, and the doctor sat down on the side of the bed.

"Did you see how nicely I got rid of those fellows, Ralph?" he said. "They are the ones to blame for awaking you out of your sleep. If I had been here, it would never have happened."

Ralph took the cup, and drained the powerful opiate at once. In a few moments he was silent, and the doctor called in Judge Campbell. They raised his head and washed the wound carefully in tepid water, and the physician shook his head. The bone was badly splintered and portions of the brain exuded.

He set to work at once, carefully removing the splintered pieces of bone as much as he dared. The patient did not move as the work went on, and it was not until the wound was dressed and bandaged, that he began to show signs of life.

"Now listen to me, judge," whispered the doctor. "Another shock would leave him as bad off as ever. You must carefully keep from him the condition of his wife."

"Suppose he awakes sane, and asks for her?"

"I will see to it that he does not wake completely for some hours," replied the surgeon. "He must be kept quiet at all hazards. Nothing else will save him. You had better sit by the bed, and when he stirs open this bottle, and apply it to his nostrils for a moment. Let me go to Myra now."

He went out into the next room. Myra was coming slowly back to life, and the color was gradually creeping into her pale cheeks. The doctor stooped over the bed and looked at her.

"Poor girl, poor girl," he murmured. "I am sorry to see her in this condition. But she is better now, and will come to herself directly. Hush, she is waking."

At this moment the blue eyes flared wide open, and looked about with a wild stare which changed to unalloyed joy as she saw the kind face which bent above her.

"Doctor, is it you? Oh, I am so glad, for now I know it is all a horrible dream. Where is Ralph?"

"In the next room. Keep quiet, for you are still very weak. Remember that he is sick from the injuries he received."

"I remember all now, the horrible surprise

when they stood by our bedside, the midnight march, the whipping post and that fiendish old woman, and the terrible Indians. Do not deceive me; Ralph is dead and I must follow him."

"No, no; upon my honor he is not dead, but is in the next room."

"Then I must see him."

"You can not do that. Do you love your husband?"

"Oh, doctor!"

"I need not ask you that. Then, when I tell you that he is badly hurt, and that a shock might kill him, I am certain that you will not say more about seeing him just now."

"No, doctor, but you will tell me if he calls for me, for then I must go to him."

"Certainly. He is sleeping now, and will awake refreshed. Are you strong enough to tell us how it happened?"

"Not now. My head is in a whirl, and I can see nothing but the terrible sights, and hear the fearful sounds I heard last night."

"I'd like to ask you one thing, Myra," said Tim Murphy, coming forward. "Was it Mag the Witch who did this?"

"Yes; oh, yes."

"And Neadawa was there?"

"Yes."

"Then I understand it. Now try to get a little rest, for you are worn out."

"Drink this," said the doctor. She obeyed like a child, and soon fell off into sleep, while every one left the room except the doctor and Tim Murphy. She slept on for an hour, while Tom sat at the open window, with his head upon his hand, trying to study out a plan to take signal vengeance upon the Muto Chief and his unworthy associate in this crime. The doctor did not care to talk, for fear he might arouse her, and Tim had no wish for conversation. After an hour she woke with a convulsive start, and looked wildly in the doctor's face.

"How is Ralph?"

"He still sleeps; the judge is with him."

"Then what have you done with my boy?"

Tim Murphy started to his feet with a look of blank dismay. In the confusion the absence of little Ralph had not been noticed. Where was he?

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRUITLESS CHASE.

THE boy had been the pet and pride of the whole village. One and all they had vied with each other in praising his manliness, his beauty and truthfulness, and the news soon spread that he had gone. Myra could only say that he had been taken with them into the woods, and that after the terrible flogging which her husband had received, when he had recovered from his fainting-fit the old woman had disappeared, taking the boy with her, and Neadawa had led them back toward the village accompanied by the other Indian, who said that Mag would follow them directly with little Ralph. But, when they reached the edge of the woods, neither the old woman nor the boy appeared, and the two Indians turned away without a word.

"Give me back the boy, you red demon,"

cried Ralph, seizing Neadawa by the throat. "You had better."

Neadawa shook him off, and made a sign to him to stand back, but he was half frantic at the loss of his child, and rushed at him again! Then that terrible arm was raised, and Myra saw her husband fall, bathed in blood, and dropped beside him, overcome by the spectacle. In this condition they were found by their friends.

Tim Murphy no sooner heard that his little playmate was gone than his face took on an almost ferocious expression. He had loved the boy. A childless man, with no home ties or hopes, it had been his delight to pour out the affections of his rough but true heart upon such an object, and there was no wish which was in his power to grant which the hunter ever refused the boy.

"God do so to me, and more also, if I do not make this a bitter thing to the whole Mohawk nation," he cried, fiercely. "Out of the way, thar! I'm goin' far and wide to find the boy."

"What will you do, Tim?" demanded the villagers, as they gathered round him outside. "You've got to be careful."

"Keerful? What call have I to be keerful of that boy's lost? Curse the Mohawks; curse Mag the Witch! Now look here; that old critter had better look out how she gits in my way, for it won't be healthy for her."

"Can't we do any thing?"

"Wal, you mou't make up two companies of five men each and go down the two sides of the creek. Now look here, you. That Injin half-breed, Dockstader, had some hand in this. I don't say how much, but in my opinion he set these Injins to work. He'll have old Tim Murphy arter him fur that trick, I guess."

"We'll go down the stream, Tim. Shall we hunt for signs?"

"Yes; you hunt faithful, though I don't reckon it will do much good, 'cause like ez not they got bosses waitin' down-stream sum'ers, and are well up toward the Mohawk by this. They mou't not be so fur, but I'm afraid."

Tim set off at once with the quick step and silent tread of a practiced trailer. He started with a heavy heart, for the canoe had given the party he followed an excellent chance to cover their trail, and he had but little hope now. He reached the creek at the point where they had embarked, and in the soft sand upon the verge he saw among others the footmarks of the boy.

"They took him, of course. The question is, whar. I'd give a year out of my own life to know that."

Tim had a canoe concealed in the bushes a few hundred yards below the cabin, and this he dragged out and sent spinning away, under the strokes of his powerful arm.

Down the beautiful stream, flowing rapidly between its verdant banks, the bright colors of the flowers upon the banks and trees contrasting with rich green foliage, pausing now and then at convenient landing-places to look for the signs upon which he depended for the rescue of the boy, but finding no such sign. His quick eye would have detected any indentation in the earth, and he had taken such a mental photograph of the footsteps of those he pursued that

he could have detected any one of them among a hundred, to such a pitch of perfection had he carried his trailing propensities.

"Hi, there, Tim!" cried a voice from the bank.

The busy paddle stopped, and he looked in the direction of the voice and saw the man Frazier, mounted upon a fine horse and leading another by the bridle, standing upon the northwestern bank of the stream.

"Land!" cried Frazier. "We've got the trail."

"Good fer you, old man!" cried Tim, as he turned the bow of the canoe toward the shore. "I'll do you a good turn for that."

He landed quickly, and drew the canoe up close to the bank, screened by the overhanging foliage.

"Where's the sign?"

"North'ard, toward the Mohawk."

"Old?"

"Last night. I brought your boss along because I thought if we found sign you'd like to be in at the death."

"Bet yer life; yes," replied Tim, vaulting into the saddle. "Lead the way, you."

Away they went at a breakneck pace and found four men halted upon the bank of the creek, half a mile above the cabin.

"Them critters is smart," said Tim. "Oh, yes. They calculated to fool us by going upstream. Boys, I thank you hearty, but this ain't the time to waste words. They must be wonderful secure to make a plain trail like this."

"I calculate that they mean to strike for the hills, unless mebber they've got more men. You take the lead, Tim. We'll follow you, no matter where you lead us."

"Thank you ag'in, boys. Come on."

Bending slightly in his saddle, so as to keep his eyes upon the trail, Tim started his horse upon a slow trot, closely followed by his companions. The faces of the party were firm and bold, for they had been well selected by Frazier, every one being a borderman and hunter of the boldest type. They were heavily armed, too, carrying rifles and hatchets, in the use of which each man was an adept.

"This puzzles me, this does," muttered Tim. "That thar Neadawa ain't no fool, and, unless he's got help nigh at hand, it don't stand to reason he'd be fool enough to resk pursuit by leaving a trail like this. They've got a pony, too, and the old woman is riding him, carrying the boy."

"How old is the critter, Tim? She looks to be a hundred."

"She's done deviltry enough to be a thousand, but she ain't. As nigh as I kin git at it, she's about fifty year old; but she's seen a deal of trouble, I should judge."

"She don't owe you any good-will, Tim," said Frazier.

"She don't owe anybody in Cherry Valley none too much, but she hates the Campbells most of all. I don't know her reasons for it, but she said she didn't care how soon she died, once she got her revenge out of them."

"Where did she come from?"

"I don't know that either. Judge Campbell

knows, I reckon, but he's the man to keep his mouth shut about it, you know. This is sart'in, she's a p'izen old serpent and don't deserve mercy at our hands."

"I reckon she don't count on it. Do you s'pose Dockstader sent this Neadawa down to help her do this?"

"Of course. You see she married a half-breed Mohawk, and the tribe consider themselves in duty bound to help her. What's that on the ground ahead?"

"A button," said Frazier. "I'll git it."

He leaped out of the saddle and picked up a little shining object which lay upon the earth, glistening in the sun, and passed it to Tim.

"That's off the boy's jacket," said Tim, urging his horse forward. "Don't tell me the little 'un ain't bright beyond his years. I told the little chap if he was ever taken by the red-skins to keep dropping everything he had about him to guide us, and you see he's working the buttons off his jacket as he rides. He's got to be sharp to do it when that old critter holds him, too."

"There ain't a smarter boy in Cherry Valley nowhere," said Frazier. "Thar's another button ahead. I should think that the Indians would see them."

"Don't you see that they are ahead? The pony tracks all lie atop of theirs."

"Jest so," said Frazier. "I've got something to learn of you yet, old Tim."

"I've been a matter of thirty years learning what I know, since I was a ten-year-old, and I ought to have picked up something by this time. Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him, look at that!"

The trail had suddenly branched aside, crossing a range of lofty hills north of the creek, in what is now the northeastern portion of the town of Cherry Valley, in Otsego County. Between the high elevation now called Mount Independence and Hamilton Hill ran a narrow and rocky valley, and through this pass the trail led. But it was over a road covered with limestone shales in such a way that hardly any trail was perceptible. Tim knew that this road continued for some miles, and that the party might have taken some side path through the hills to elude pursuit, and if they had done so he was at fault.

Halting where he was, he sent two men forward at a gallop to the end of the shales to find the trail, if it continued beyond, while he halted with the rest of the party. Although he chafed at the delay, he knew that nothing was to be gained by wearing out the horses of the whole party by riding hard over the rocky path, and made the best of the necessity before him, and waited. Half an hour passed and the men came thundering back at the top of their speed to say that they had reached the *debouchure* of the pass into the next valley, and had found no signs of the enemy.

"Separate and try the passes," cried Tim. "You, Ned Thomas, go up South Pass. Frazier, try the steep path to the east. I'll go ahead and look into Lost Hunter's Gap; you others stay here."

Tim touched his horse with the spur and bounded forward at a gallop, and soon reached the place where a narrow pass turned to the

east. On each side rose a rocky wall of limestone, but he knew that a few hundred yards ahead the ground was soft and it would not take long for him to decide whether this was the route they had taken or not. As he was riding on at a rapid gallop he heard his name called in a shrill voice, and, with the instinct of the hunter, brought his rifle forward, cocking it hastily.

"No need of that, Tim Murphy," cried the same voice. "You won't dare to use your rifle."

The voice seemed to fall from the sky, and looking upward, he saw Mag the Witch standing upon a rocky ledge nearly a hundred feet above him, clasping Ralph Campbell in her arms and holding him as a shield between herself and the deadly weapon of the hunter.

"I knew you would follow, Tim Murphy," she shrieked. "Ha, ha, ha! To think that you, of all men, should think to outwit Mag the Witch."

"I did it once, you old heathen," cried Tim. "Not long ago, either."

"Lucky for you that you did, you poor-spirited fool. Why do you follow me?"

"I want that boy," replied Tim. "Come, I ain't alone. You give him up, or it will be the worse for you."

"I'm not afraid of you," replied Mag. "Come, they say you are a good shot. Why don't you shoot me?"

"I will, if you don't bring the boy to me at once."

"Help, help, Tim," cried little Ralph. "I want to go back to my mother, and she holds me."

"Why don't you fire, I say? I'm not going to give him up to you; be sure of that. He may as well die in this way as any other, and the ball must pass through his body to get to mine. Didn't I tell you that I'd have revenge? Where is Ralph Campbell's pride now? It is as low in the dust as my son's was, when you beat him like a dog. Why don't you fire—why don't you fire? Coward, you dare not!"

"I don't want to kill the boy," replied Tim, emitting a sharp whistle to call up his men. "But I'm coming up."

"Yes, do; come up and see me. But remember this, the moment you set foot upon this ledge I will throw the boy down upon the limestone at the foot of the bluff. You know that I will keep my word, so come if you dare."

Still holding the struggling boy in her arms, she advanced boldly to the very brink of the precipice and stood there defying him. He saw now that she had him in her power, and knowing her vindictive nature he understood that nothing could save the lad from death if he climbed the bluff, and he fell back with a groan.

"You see it now, do you?" she shouted. "Yah! what a fool you are to set your wits against a woman spurred on by the deadly hate which thrills my breast. Go back to Judge Campbell and say to him that a voice sneaks from out an open grave, and says to him, this is the Gipsy's revenge for the wrong done years ago. Will you do this?"

"I take no message from you to the judge."

"Promise or the boy is dead," she cried, raising the light from above her head. "Speak quickly, for I do not propose to waste time with you."

"Yes, yes, I promise! Hold your hand, and do not take revenge on a boy like that. He ain't to blame, poor little fellow."

"Not he, but his blood is guilty of this wrong," she answered. "You will give my message to the judge?"

"Yes."

"And say to him that Margaret, after long years, has taken vengeance on his race. I do not know that I should have done this but for the last outrage, and that decided me."

"What money will pay you to give the boy up to me?"

"What money? Fool, if every ounce of your body and the bodies of the Campbell race combined was worth its weight in diamonds, and you were to lay it at my feet as the ransom of this boy, I would laugh at it, and at you. Money! offer me that insult again and you doom him to death."

"Think of his mother, then. You say you love that rough son of yours, and I s'pose you do. Think what her agony must be when she knows that Ralph is lost completely."

"Is her agony less than mine? Good-by, and look your last upon the boy, for you shall never see his face again."

"Tim, Tim!" cried little Ralph. "She will carry me away. Oh, don't let her carry me away, but take me home to my mother!"

The rattle of hoofs announced the coming of the rest of the party, and Mag, with a lurid smile, waited for their approach, and all uttered cries of delight as they saw her, and five rifles were lifted, but at a fierce order from Tim they lowered them again.

"Won't any thing move you, Mag?"

"Nothing you have power to say."

"Remember that Tom Dockstader ain't dead yet, and that I'm a bad enemy to make; I allus was and will be."

"Tom can take care of himself, now that he has taken to the woods. He hides himself even from the old mother who has done so much for him."

"I'll mark a bullet for him and if he ever comes in range he'll go down. I promise you that, you old heathen. Come, boys; it's all over, and we can't do anything for the boy. Good-by, Ralph, and remember that I'll never give up the chase until I find you, and bring you back to your mother."

The boy stretched out his hands imploringly and still cried out for aid, and the pursuing party felt a thrill pass through their ranks as they realized how utterly helpless they were in the hands of the vile woman, who laughed like a fiend as she regarded them, and turning, disappeared from their sight, still carrying the child in her arms. Slowly and sadly they went down the pass together and back over the road they had traversed so quickly during the last ten hours. Tim knew that he carried with him the knowledge which would forever blast the happiness of the family whose welfare was his constant care, and yet he must tell it. Down beside the shining stream, over the ruins of

Mag's cabin, and into the village they went, and the settlers read in their dejected faces the failure of the expedition. Tim rode straight to Judge Campbell's house and asked to see him, and was shown into a small room in which the judge did his writing, and the old man rose hurriedly to greet him.

"Murphy! back again? Do not keep me in suspense but tell me at once the fate of little Ralph. Is he dead?"

"No," said Tim. "He ain't dead, and yet I'm not sure it wouldn't be better for the poor little chap if he was. Mag Dockstader has got him, and that's a fact."

Tim related the events of the pursuit, and how he had brought Mag to bay, with the danger of the boy, and Campbell saw that he had done all for the best.

"And this terrible woman has him still. What can be her motive in this?"

"She gave me a message to you, sir. I didn't like to take it, but she swore to throw Ralph down the rocks if I didn't. Her words were, 'Tell him that a voice speaks from an open grave, and says to him, 'this is the Gypsy's revenge for the wrong done her years ago.'"

"Ha!"

"She said more: 'Margaret—she speaks as if you would know the name—after long years has taken vengeance on her race.'"

"Margaret; Gipsy?"

"Yes."

The judge uttered a gasping sob, and his head fell forward on the table and he seemed to struggle with intense feeling for some moments. "But it cannot be; it is impossible that this hag can be the same. I forget myself, Tim; you know nothing of this terrible woman. If it is indeed the one of whom I speak, then God forgive her for her many crimes. But I thought her dead, years and years ago. Now I will go to Ralph's house, but I fear the effect of this tale on him."

They told the story first to Myra, and as she sunk fainting on the bed they became aware that Ralph, with a strange leer upon his face, was looking in at the open door. The look changed to one of agony, and he put his hand to his wounded head, and uttering a loud cry of despair, tore the bandages from the wound and sunk to the floor. Three days he hovered between life and death, but the doctor shook his head when he was spoken of. On the fourth day he drew Myra aside, for she had risen above her own great grief to attend to her husband, and said:

"Prepare yourself for the worst, Myra. Your husband is insane!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER MANY YEARS.

TEN years passed away and brought its changes to the beautiful settlement at Cherry Valley. Little by little it had increased, slowly, of course, because the people dreaded to incur the dangers of a frontier life in these troublous times. The war of the Revolution had been going on for over two years with varying success. Cherry Valley was threatened by an enemy whom all knew and feared, the redoubtable Joseph Brant, who was now repaying the English for the

services they had done him, by fighting their battles.

Judge Campbell had prepared for danger like a man. His house was a fortress, the windows heavily shuttered and barred, with double doors and loopholes for musketry. Every available man upon the "Patent" was heavily armed, and drilled every day upon the open ground in front of the great house. Boys not sixteen years of age staggered under the weight of great muskets which their young arms could hardly raise to a level, such was the war-spirit which actuated the people at this time. Gray-haired men in spectacles practiced with their trusty rifles, trying to regain the prowess of old days, and women vied with each other in making cartridges for their husbands, fathers and brothers' use. These were the days when men lay down to rest with loaded guns beside them, scarcely knowing whether they should see the dawning of another morning.

A small detachment of troops from Palatine, then a thriving village on the Mohawk, occupied the village. They could not spare many troops from the army of liberty to fight the battles of the border, but rather depended upon the strong arms of the settlers themselves to defend their lives and families.

Tim Murphy was still in Cherry Valley upon a furlough, though he had long ago joined himself to that crack corps, Morgan's riflemen, and was one of the best shots in that famous command. But in a short season of repose, for meritorious conduct in the field, he had obtained a month's leave of absence, and with his rifle upon his shoulder, had ridden down to visit his old friends. There was not a man or woman who had seen him before who was not glad to welcome the rifleman back. He had ridden into the village from Palatine at the end of an autumn day, and was instantly surrounded by the villagers, eager for news from the North.

"What news, Tim?" cried Frazier, one of the first to welcome him. "Glad to see you back, old man."

"I ain't so sorry to git back, neither, Ned," replied the rifleman, grasping the friendly hands extended toward him. "How's everybody?"

It took some time to tell him all the news, the changes which had occurred, the marriages, births and deaths among his old companions.

"And Ralph Campbell; what about him?" demanded Tim, eagerly.

"Poor Ralph!" replied Frazier. "He's just the same now; now a very child, and again frantic when his wrongs come home to him. He won't stay in the village much, and he's got a haunt away to the north, among the hills, where he will hide himself, and when he does that, woe to the Indian who crosses his path."

"Does he know his friends?"

"Oh, yes. He isn't set against any white man, except Dockstader, and he's got his name printed on the wall of his cabin, and I've seen him sit looking at it for an hour at a time. It's an awful thing to see a man like him out of his mind."

"Never heard of the boy, I s'pose?"

"Never; did you?" replied Frazier.

"Not once. I've heard of Neadawa, but

never sighted him. He fights under Brant now, and they say makes bloody work. By the way, what fool sent that message to Brant, calling him a goose?"

"Captain McKean; that was rather a cunning letter he wrote."

"What did he say?"

"He wrote that if Brant would come to Cherry Valley they would change him from a Brant to a Goose. They set it up on the trail, directed to the sachem, and they say he got it."

"I s'pose Captain McKean wants Cherry Valley burned to the ground, don't he? Brant is crazy mad about that letter, and he wrote to a Tory named Cass that he would make the people of Cherry Valley sorry for having called him a goose, and if you don't look out he'll do it, too. It's a foolish thing to insult any man wantonly, much more sech a man as Joseph Brant. He is a good warrior, and holds a spite eternally. Where is Myra Campbell?"

"She lives at the big house, and is the shadow of the woman she was. Mag, the Witch, took a lasting revenge on her."

"Yes, curse her. I'd give a good deal to know where she is, but the old she-devil knows how to hide right well. I wonder if I could see Myra Campbell now."

"There she sits under the big tree. I know she'll be glad to see you."

Tim shook off his friends and rode hastily across the lawn in front of Campbell's house. A woman seated under a tree started up as he approached, and ran toward him with outstretched hands, and the brave rifleman's heart gave a great throb as he recognized in her, faded and wan, the wreck of the beautiful woman he had known so long before.

"Oh, Tim!" she cried, "good and faithful man, you cannot tell how glad I am to see you again."

"I don't reckon it's all on one side, Myra," replied Murphy, turning his head away. "I'm glad to see you, too, but I don't like to see you looking so pale."

"We cannot all lead happy lives, Tim. Poor Ralph—"

Her voice broke, and she placed her hand upon her heart as if to thrill its throbbings, and Tim understood what she would have said.

"There, there, Myra. Don't; I can't bear to see you. Don't I know what you suffer every day you live? You know I'm a rough, hard man, but I loved Campbell. He larnt woodcraft from me, and a better or a quicker scholar I never see. We tramped the woods together, and he talked book-larnin' to me and I taught him wood-ranging, so that we was even thar. We slept in the same blanket and laid down at night beside the same clear stream, and it ain't too much for me to say that if my life would give him back to you as he was afore— afore I went away, I wouldn't hesitate to lay it down."

"I believe you, dear Tim. You did all you could for your friends, and nearly lost your own life by the same cruel hands which robbed me of my darling boy and of my husband, for we are separated as much as if oceans rolled between us. You have not seen that cruel woman or her son since you went away?"

"No; and I've tried hard."

"They seem to have vanished from off the face of the earth. My uncle has many friends, even among the Indians, and they assure him that the boy was not brought into the Indian villages, and that Mag did not come there."

"That's curi's. The old woman is mighty cute, and she knew that John Butler would give the boy back if she brought him to the Mohawks. She's in hiding somewhere, and so's her son. I don't know sart'in whether your boy is alive, but if he is, wharever Mag, the Witch, is, she's got him. Don't quite despair, and we may save him yit."

"Hush; here is Ralph. Do not say a word about the boy or you will drive him out into the woods again, and he has not been here for three weeks."

A tall man, dressed in a ragged suit of buckskins, with a rifle thrown into the hollow of his arm, leaped the low wall which bounded the estate, and came toward them with a hurried step.

Tim had expected to see a change in him, but nothing like this. His hair was turning gray, and hung in a matted and disheveled mass upon his shoulders. His beard was long and neglected, and the little of his face not covered by his tangled growth was pale and wan, and the splendid eyes which had made his face so noble in other days, blazed with insanity.

"Ha!" he cried, "who is this that comes from the outer world? Let me see your face."

He caught Tim by the shoulder with a grip of iron and whirled him about, looking fiercely in his face. Something of old remembrance seemed to shoot across his troubled brain as he looked at the once familiar features, and he dropped his hand.

"I used to know you up there, didn't I?" he said. "I knew a great many in the outside world and once in a while I meet them."

"Yes, you knew me. I hope I was a true friend to you then."

"You've got a rifle," said Ralph, in the same tone. "Is it a good one? Can you shoot as true as a die with it?"

"Yes."

"Then look here. There's some one in the outside world I want sent down to me. If I could go up there myself I'd kill him, but I can't. And there's a she-devil up there too, but you can't kill her, or I'd ask you to do that for me. See: I've got their names here."

He drew a piece of paper from the bosom of his hunting-shirt, and held it up before the eyes of the rifleman, who read these names, inclosed in brackets, thus:

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| { | Neadawa, the Mute Chief. | } To die. |
| { | Tom Dockstader. | |
| { | Mag the Witch; a devil. | |

"Do you see the names?"

"Yes."

"You knew them too, when you were in the outer world. Do you think that you can find them?"

"Yes; at least I'll try."

"Do it, and I'll love you. Not as I love her," pointing to Myra, who stood with bowed head, her face covered by her hands and the tears trickling down through her fingers. "See, she

weeps. Do you know who made her face so pale, so very, very sad? It was these three whose names you read. Do you think it would be wrong, then, to kill those who can make an angel weep?"

"Not wrong; it is a duty, and we ought not to neglect it," replied Tim, sternly.

"I don't neglect it, you may be sure. I'm waiting, I'm watching, and something whispers to me that I shall not wait long. Do you know that when I lie down to rest, spirits come and talk to me? They tell me strange things, but I believe them, because the spirits never lie. They say to me that this white face will have red cheeks again, and that one who is dead shall live. These are good spirits who speak."

He caught Myra suddenly in his arms and drew her head down upon his bosom. "This one will be happy again, then. Shall you not be glad when she is happy? My head is light, and spins about when I think of those three names, but when I lay my head upon my bosom I forget them."

"Oh, Ralph," she murmured, "if you could forget them forever."

"They must be dead first. When they are dead, I will forget, but until then, their faces will come to me in dreams; and my back gets sore. Ha! what made it sore?"

He pushed her from him suddenly, and the light which had come into his face for a moment faded out, his eyes began to blaze, and catching up his rifle he hugged it to his breast.

"I can shoot straight and true and must go and find them. Will you come to me soon, you from the outer world? She knows where I stay and will tell you."

"I will come to-morrow."

"What does to-morrow mean; when they are dead?"

"I will come soon, and you must wait for me."

"When you come to the place where I am, strike two stones together three times, like this."

He caught up two stones from the earth, and beat them together with all his force, with a cunning look in his face.

"When I hear that, I will come, and you shall go with me to find the wicked ones. She is not wicked, but she is very sad. I must go away, for a spirit whispers to me that it is safer to be among the rocks than here."

"Do not go, Ralph, stay with me," Myra said.

"No, no, no, no! Not here. I am called, and when the whisper comes from the rocks and trees, I can not stay. Let me go quickly."

He stooped and pressed his lips to hers in a frenzied way, and springing over the wall, hurried toward the woods, which soon hid him from their sight. Tim Murphy set his teeth hard, and turned to Myra, who was leaning against a tree, almost unable to move.

"Don't grieve too much, Myra," said the rifleman. "Who knows what fate may be in store for you. Let's believe as he does, that the spirits whisper the truth to him, and that you'll be happy yet. I'm sure stranger things happen than that, and if you could find your boy, who knows but the sight of him would bring his

memory back to him. And that boy I'll find, if he's above ground."

"Do you think it possible that my little Ralph still lives? Would he not come back to me?"

"He was five years old when he was taken away. New scenes and associates make great changes, I heard tell, and it ain't likely that Mag would take any pains to bring you back to his mind. It's more likely she'll teach him to forget you."

"What if she teaches him to hate me? Surely she would not be so wicked."

"She's equal to anything, that old cat is," replied Tim. "You mustn't talk about it now, but tell me where Ralph stays when he takes to the woods."

"He stays in the deep ravine, near Tecahawara Falls; you know the place."

"Bet you I do. I'll go and see him to-morrow morning and try what I can do with him. Perhaps he won't remember after being with me awhile, and going to the same places we used to visit. I want to see Colonel Campbell now, for I've got a dispatch from Palatine, and Lieutenant Thornton is coming down here to-morrow to see what troops we need, because I warn you that Cherry Valley ain't safe."

"Do you think the Indians will attack us?"

"They will if they get a chance, and Brant is mad at us on account of McKean's letter; the most unreasonable piece of foolishness I ever heard tell on."

"It was foolish, since it aroused the wrath of the great chief against us. Come into the house and I will find my uncle, who will be glad to see you."

The colonel and Tim remained closeted for some hours, and the rifleman passed the night at the great house. In the morning, before the dew was off the grass, he took his rifle and started out to find Ralph. He stopped at the entrance of a ravine and looked to the priming of his heavy rifle, and saw that the flint was tight in its setting, for nothing was more probable than his meeting a panther in this dismal ravine. When he finished his examination he heard a footstep passing down the ravine, the quick tread of a man in haste, and with a hunter's instinct, buried himself in the bushes to wait until he came on, not caring to trust himself in that place with a perfect stranger. The footsteps stopped suddenly, as if the comer had heard some noise and halted, and Tim held his breath and waited, as the steps came on more slowly.

"Whistler!" cried a hoarse voice, "where are you?"

"Me come," answered an unmistakable Indian voice. "You wait."

"You hang back too much, you born thief. I hope you ain't skeered!" roared the first voice.

"Cherry Valley people no good," replied the same voice. "They take Whistler's scalp."

"Oh, come on, you born idiot. I ain't got any more call to go to Cherry Valley than you have."

The footsteps sounded nearer, the bushes parted, and two men came out into the pass, at the sight of whom Tim could hardly restrain a cry of joy, for he saw before him Tom Dockstader and Whistling Wind.

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE COMBAT.

THE sight of that dark face, so full of evil passions, aroused all that was vindictive in the heart of the waiting rifleman. Although he was not certain that Dockstader had any share in the abduction of Ralph Campbell and his subsequent punishment, he still believed that it was done by his orders, and now seeing him in the company of one of the prominent actors in that tragedy, he could hardly restrain his passion, and twice he raised his rifle to aim at the heart of the Tory, and so many times lowered it. Although he knew that this man was of a bloody nature, and would not hesitate to destroy him under the circumstances, Tim Murphy could not bring himself to the enormity of shooting a white man from the shelter of a bush.

"You hang back like a skeered baby, Whistler," said Dockstader, with an oath. "Why don't you come along, if you are goin' to?"

"Look," said Whistler, stopping, "white man sign; fresh."

He had chanced upon the footprints of Tim, and knelt beside them with a startled face.

"I believe you are right," growled Dockstader. "What of that? Ain't there plenty of hunters in the hills?"

"No hunt now; 'fraid of Mohawk. Thayendanega great warrior."

"Tush! They ain't goin' to starve because they think Brant is in the woods. You ridiculous critter, what are you thinking about? I— Blood and thunder, what is that?"

Tim had suddenly raised his head and sprung out with leveled rifle, and stood before them with blazing eyes.

"Don't tech a weapon, either of you, or you go down, mind. I've got two shots here, and I never miss my man."

"Hold on, Tim Murphy," said Dockstader, in a trembling voice. "You're the last man I expected to meet, that I tell you. I thought you was with Morgan."

"Kept posted 'bout me, did you?" said Tim. "Now see yer; I've follered you for ten years and never met you till now. I don't want to fool with you, neither. Whar's little Ralph Campbell?"

"What do I know about him?" replied the outlaw. "I ain't seen him since I left Cherry Valley."

"You lie!"

"It's a noble thing to give a man the lie when you've got a shooter p'inted at his heart, ain't it, now? Look here, you say you've looked fur me a long time. Waal, I've looked fur you, too, and never met you, and now I ain't goin' to back down."

"That means flight?" said Tim.

"Juss so," replied Dockstader. "You realize my meaning exactly."

"When?"

"Right now."

"Weepens?"

"Rifles."

"Good enuff in its way, but that ain't goin' to bring back Ralph Campbell's boy, and I'm bound to find him. You cussid fool, do you think to stand up when I look through the double sights."

"I didn't know you was a coward afore, Tim Murphy."

"I didn't know it either, and I don't know it now. I've got you both, hard and fast, and I say you've got to tell me whar the boy is."

"Don't I tell you I don't know?"

"Don't I tell you that's a lie?"

"Now, curse your impudent tongue, if I git out of this I'll make you sweat blood, I will. No matter whar the boy is; you don't know and you won't know, so if you mean to murder me, blaze away."

"You won't tell?"

"Nary time."

"Then you'll never git back to that hansum mother of yours. See here; you take and tie that Injin, hand and foot, 'cause if we've got to fight I won't hev him on my back."

"S'pose he won't let me tie him?"

"I reckon he will, 'cause ef he don't he's a dead nigger. He'll let you tie him fast enough."

"Ain't got anything to tie him with?"

"You got a belt, ain't you? Wal, tie his feet with that and then I'll tell you what to do next."

With a muttered curse, the outlaw tore off his belt and proceeded to tie his companion, but so loosely that he could have slipped his feet out of the strap readily enough.

"That won't do," said Tim. "You strap him tighter, or it will be wuss fer you. Tie him as if it was me."

The other complied, and while he was doing this Tim slipped off his own belt and threw it down.

"There; take that gun of his and pass it behind his back. Put his hands over it and draw them forward. Now take my belt and strap his hands in front."

"You seem to be afraid of a little chap like Whistler."

"Oh, shet up, do. I don't want any back talk out of you, Tom Dockstader. Only do as I tell you and it'll satisfy me."

Dockstader complied, very unwillingly indeed, and the Indian was rendered helpless.

"Lay him on his back now, you critter. You needn't be very easy with him if you don't keer about it. The little cuss ought to be hung, and I ain't quite sart'n I won't hang him when I git done with him."

The Indian was thrown upon his back and lay there unable to rise, glaring vindictively at his captor.

"That's all right. Now you kin pick up your rifle. She's loaded, I s'pose?"

"Yes."

"Then you jest walk to that point of rock and git ready. We won't fire until I am ready, you understand."

"It isn't fair; you have the best chance."

"I s'pose so, but it don't matter. I ain't goin' to let you shoot me in the back. Or, hold on; when you git to that pi'nt you lay your rifle down and come back here. I'll give you a fair show anyhow."

The outlaw stepped to the spot indicated and laid his rifle down and came back at once.

"Throw down your knife and hatched," said Tim.

Dockstader obeyed,

"Now come with me."

They walked together to a place about the same distance from the central point with the other rifle, and here Tim laid his weapon down, and signaled to Dockstader to come back to the center of the glade.

"Now, I'm goin' to count three," he said. "At the word, you start fur your rifle and I'll start fur mine. I'm the best runner and so I've laid my rifle fifty feet further from the center than yours. The minnit you git your rifle you kin fire if you like, and I guess that you will. One, two, three!"

At the last syllable the two men shot away in opposite directions. It was purely a race for life, and the man that reached his weapon first had the best chance, since both were practiced marksmen. There was no better runner in the whole Cherry Valley section than the rifleman. Dockstader knew that he was doomed unless some accident happened to him, or he could study out some plan of escape. Yet he never slackened his speed, and when Tim snatched up his rifle and whirled, the Tory was upon the bank of the rapid creek where he had laid the rifle, but he did not stoop for it, but with a cry of fury plunged into the bed of the stream, behind the bank of which he concealed himself from view. His rifle still lay upon the bank, within arm's length of him, but he dared not raise his head to get it. Kneeling upon the earth a hundred and fifty yards away, with his rifle laid across his knees Tim waited for him to make some effort to get at his gun. Having a great respect for the aim of the rifleman, Dockstader was very careful about showing any portion of his anatomy above the bank, but his situation was irksome, and he was actuated by a deadly hatred of the enemy. Soon a coarse, brown hand stole slowly over the bank and moved with catlike dexterity toward the rifle which lay upon the sod. Murphy brought his rifle to his shoulder, every muscle in his frame seeming all at once to turn to iron, and the weapon cracked. A yell of agony sounded through the ravine and the hand was quickly withdrawn, and Tim, holding his second barrel ready for a shot, ran rapidly down the pass toward the place where his enemy was hidden. When he reached the spot he found the sod near the rifle-stock stained with blood, and the water discolored at the bottom, but the enemy was gone. Furious at his loss, Tim leaped down the bank and looked about in the muddy water for traces by which he could tell whether he had gone up or down stream, but he could find no sign. Grinding his teeth in rage, Tim picked up the rifle and turned back to the place where he had left the Indian, when a cry of fear from his lips made him hasten his steps, and he saw Ralph Campbell kneeling beside the savage, with a bared knife clasped in his hand, evidently meditating where to strike.

"Hold on, Ralph; don't kill him," cried Murphy. "He ain't the one you want, and you haven't got his name on your paper."

"Red, red, like blood," replied Ralph, looking up. "Neadawa's face was like his, and the spirit whispers that he was there when the little boy was lost."

"Do you see this rifle?" said Tim, "If I told

you the name of the man who owned it, you would not wait long."

"His name?"

"Tom Dockstader."

The maniac bounded to his feet with a wild cry, brandishing his knife above his head. "Come, come, come!" he screamed. "Show me the way and I will follow him like a hound upon the scent, for he is marked, 'to die.'"

"Come this way," said the rifleman, who wished to save Whistling Wind for the present. "I will show you his blood. Take your rifle, for you may need it."

They reached the bank where the blood of Dockstader yet showed plainly, and Ralph stooped and looked at it, with an expression more like sanity than anything he had seen in it before, and then leaped down the bank.

"Come, come," he whispered. "I know where to look for him. Ha, ha, who can hide from Mad Ralph in the Tecahawara glen? I'll show you the way."

"Wait until I lay the Indian in the bushes where he will be out of sight," said Tim. "We'll want him when we come back."

Tim ran back and laid the Indian by the side of the path, out of sight of any one who might come down the pass by accident, and then hurried down to the creek again, where Ralph welcomed him by an impatient gesture.

"I must find him," he said; "because I must study his heart and see if it is of stone. It must be stone or steel, it is so hard. Come, come, come, and let me show you the secret places where he will try to hide."

He turned down-stream, closely followed by his companion, who began to realize that he was in fearful company, and to wonder what would be the fate of the unfortunate they pursued if he should be so unlucky as to fall into the hands of the man he had so wronged.

"Look here, look, look, look!" he whispered, pointing to a stone beside the stream. "I told you I could track him. Here is blood, his blood. Heaven! can this man bleed?"

"What will you do with him if you find him, Ralph? Not kill him, I hope?"

"What would you do with him, if not that? I want to see him lie howling in the lowest pit, enduring all the tortures of the accursed. Ha, ha! He will wish then that he had not done it."

"But he is not the one who stole your boy."

"Don't speak of him, I tell you. I remember that he was small, and his cheeks were red, and he loved me. Sometimes when I lie asleep, I seem to hear his voice speaking to me; his voice, the sweetest voice in all the world. Up here; he went this way."

They began to climb the ragged rocks, upon which the print of blood, not yet dried up, was plainly to be seen. The rifleman saw that they were not far from the object of their pursuit, and began to think what artifice he could make use of, to save the unfortunate man alive and make him tell whether the boy was alive or dead. They reached the summit of the rock and began the descent, and Ralph bent to listen.

"He is here, close at hand. I seem to feel him near me," he hissed.

Close beside the path there was a thicket of

mountain bushes densely packed together, and they could trace the blood upon the green leaves. Ralph thrust aside the leaves and looked in, and as he did so a desperate man sprung up, with the blood streaming from his shattered left hand, and sprung at the nearest enemy, which happened to be Ralph. But, as he saw his face, he staggered back with a cry of alarm, and the long claw-like fingers of the maniac were fastened upon his throat.

"Let up, let up! I thought you were dead. Hold his hand, Tim Murphy, unless you mean to let him murder me!"

"He ought to murder you, if so be you'd call it murder. I wouldn't for one. The sooner he finishes you off the better."

"Help, help! I know more than you think. I'll tell you where to find the boy, give up the old woman, do anything, if you will only save me from him. I've only got one hand or I wouldn't ask help, curse you."

"Hands off, Ralph. Didn't you hear him say he knew whar to find the boy?"

"The boy! Does he know? Then let me dig it out of his stony breast, for there the knowledge lies."

"Don't hurt him now, because thar's law enough in Cherry Valley to do him justice. Loose your hold, Ralph, and let me talk to him. Stand up, you nat'ral thief, and answer my questions. In the first place, you say that the boy lives?"

"Yes."

"And you'll find him?"

"I promise, only keep that madman's hands off'n me. I ain't easily skeered, but I'm afraid of him. You let me lead and I'll take you to the boy in half an hour."

"I'll let you lead, but I'll be close to you, and if you offer any treachery, look out fur me."

"I'll not do that. You've got a pistol and know what to do if I play false; this way."

They turned down the path again, the outlaw first and the rifleman following close at his heels with a pistol in each hand, while Ralph followed with cautious steps. They descended the hill and struck the level country beyond, when Dockstader gave a signal-cry and bounded into the bushes so suddenly that Tim had no time to use his pistol, while, at the same moment, a fierce band of savages rushed out upon them, and in spite of their struggles, bore them to the earth.

CHAPTER X.

MAG COMES AGAIN.

THEY were dragged into the open space among the tangled bushes, and here, to their utter surprise, they saw a strange body of men assembled. White men, upon whose faces bloodthirsty cruelty and love of crime was written in plain characters. Foremost among them he saw Captain Walter Butler, a man whose name is rendered infamous in connection with the fearful massacre of Cherry Valley. Dockstader, with his bleeding hand held up to awake the indignation of his companions, and Joseph Brant, who, Indian though he was, was not so cruel an enemy as either of the white leaders. It is

known what reason Dockstader had to hate the inhabitants of Cherry Valley, and Butler's hate is a matter of history.

Into his power the treacherous Dockstader had led his captors.

"This is the man you want, Butler," said he. "Drat his head, he shot Frazer at Bemis Heights."

"Ha! say you so? Is this the famous Tim Murphy?"

"Bet your life it is," replied Murphy, coolly.

"You don't think I'll deny my name, do you?"

"Your name is enough to hang you, my worthy friend," said Butler. "You had better forswear it."

"Why speak in that way to a brave man?" said Brant, advancing. "I am glad to take a good warrior by the hand, and welcome him, and a hair of his head shall not be touched."

"Who says that?" roared Dockstader. "Do you see this hand of mine, Captain Brant? That's the man who shot me."

"I care not for that. He is a prisoner, and he shall be treated as a prisoner."

"No; he shall hang for the murder of General Frazer," said Walter Butler.

"If you hang every one who has killed men in battle, what man in all this company does not deserve death? Frazer was a good man and a gallant soldier, the best in that great army which surrendered to the Yankee, Gates, at Saratoga. But he died on the battle-field, as you and I may do some day, and we have paid the last tribute to his memory. Do not talk of hanging this brave man because he killed the general."

"I won't talk about it now. Put him under guard, Dockstader, and give a good account of him."

"I'll do that," replied Dockstader, with a sinister look. "He won't trouble us long."

"That is right," said Brant. "Let him have a good guard, two Indians and two white men. Remember that he is not your prisoner, but was taken by my men, and they will claim him. Who is the other?"

"I'd like to say a word about that," said Tim. "You see that Dockstader, don't you? Wal, ten years ago he stole two hosses, one of them mine and the other belonging to this young man. We caught him and gave him forty lashes."

"Shut your mouth," shrieked Dockstader, "unless you wish me to fasten it forever."

"Will you keep him off me while I speak, Captain Brant?" said Tim. "I know you are the best man in all this party, whatever men say ag'in' you."

"The man shall speak," said Brant. "Go on."

"I say we gave him forty lashes, and set him in the stocks, and after that banished him out of Cherry Valley. He sent back two Mohawks, the man called the Mute Chief, and another name Whistling Wind. They both came in the night and took out Ralph Campbell, his wife and their little boy, and beat Ralph till he fainted, and stole the boy. When they went away, Neadawa struck Ralph, then, with a hatchet, and he has never been in his right mind sence. Now I ask if the Mohawks and Senecas make war on crazy men?"

"Listen," said Brant, in his mellow voice. "No Indian will harm a man upon whom the finger of the Great Spirit is laid. Is this the man they call mad Ralph Campbell?"

"Yes."

"Then he shall not be harmed," said Brant, turning and speaking a few words to the Indians in their own tongue, in answer to which a murmur rose among them.

"I have spoken," said the chief. "The Senecas say that the weak brain has been punishment enough, and he shall not be harmed, though they will keep him, lest he should carry the news to Cherry Valley."

"Captain Brant, it seems to me you take a great deal into your hands," said Butler. "You don't leave us a prisoner, and this Campbell is a personal and vindictive enemy of my friend Dockstader."

"Your friend?"

"Yes."

"You heard Murphy say that when there was no war this man stole horses. I choose my friends better than that."

"You are trying to quarrel with me, Brant, and you may succeed if you keep on. I say you have no right to stand in the way of my revenge or of Dockstader's."

"Dockstader has had revenge enough. His enemy is mad, his child is stolen away, and yet you seek revenge."

"You may have your way for the present, Captain Brant. Choose your two guards and let Dockstader choose the others, and see that they take care of these men. If they escape, be it on the heads of the guards."

Brant picked out two men from his personal adherents, men upon whom he could rely, and Dockstader called two villainous-looking Tories to complete the guard, and the two men were led away and bound to trees in a neighboring thicket.

"See here," said Tim, speaking to one of the men. "I wish you'd tell Captain Brant I'd like to see him without Butler or Dockstader."

"Go to the devil," replied the Tory he addressed. "I'm not going your errands, and if I had my way I'd split that head of yours with my hatchet."

"I s'pose you're used to it. So you won't call Brant?"

"No."

"Brant is here," said a quiet voice. "What would you have with him?"

"I wanted to tell you something, if you will answer me a question to pay for it."

"Ask your question then I can tell."

"I should 'a' said two questions. Where is Dockstader's mother—the woman we called Mag, the Witch—and the Mohawk chief called Neadawa?"

"I know but little of Neadawa. He does not live in the Mohawk village, but has set up his wigwam in the deep woods, five miles away. The chief is a mystery to me, and he comes and goes as the cloud we see to-day and which to-morrow is gone from our gaze. In battle he is terrible and brings home many scalps, but his voice is dumb and he can not endure to live among the Indians, and no one sees him except Whistling Wind and the white woman, you call

Mag, the Witch, who has lived in the woods near his cabin."

"Where are they now?"

"Mag is here, but where Neadawa is I cannot tell. He may be with us to-morrow, or he may not come at all. What will you tell me in return for this?"

"If you will send a man up the Tecabawara you'll find Whistling Wind in the bushes, tied hand and foot. It's no use to leave the little cuss there to starve."

Brant gave one of the guards an order in the Indian tongue and he hurried away, while Brant remained leaning against a tree.

"Is McKean in Cherry Valley?" he said, at length.

"No; he has gone to Fort Plain with his family."

"That is not right," said Brant. "He sent me a challenge, and I have come to answer it, and now he is not here. He is a fine soldier to run away like that."

"Captain McKean is a brave sojer, and he wouldn't leave if he thought there was any chance."

"I know it," said Brant. "I would rather take him than any man in Cherry Valley, but I would not have harmed a hair of his head. I am sorry that he is not here to meet me."

The Indian who had been sent away at this moment returned, and the sachem, after promising that they could not be harmed, went hastily away. The afternoon passed, and Murphy remained bound to the tree facing his demented friend, who remained with his head bowed, without speaking a word. There was a look of the deepest dejection in his face, and his eyes had a mournful expression. Murphy was in agony for the fate of Cherry Valley, for he felt that, while Alden was in command, proper precautions would not be taken. If he had known that Campbell, unable to prevail upon the colonel, had mounted and started for Fort Plain to hurry up reinforcements, his dread would have been greater, for he knew that Campbell understood the men with whom he had to deal. As he stood there he writhed in his bonds, and had nearly loosened one hand, when one of the Tories, with a violent oath, struck him upon the mouth with his clinched hand.

"You had better stop that, Tim Murphy. I know you of old, and if you try that again I'll give you the knife instead of the fist. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, I seem to realize it," said Tim, shaking his head. "Curse you, don't hit a man when he's tied."

"Strike him again, Epps, strike him again. Let me get at him, and I'll mark his face for life."

It was his ancient enemy, Mag, the Witch, upon whom the ten years past had made no perceptible change. The same sharp, vindictive face, the same bent form, and piercing black eyes. She stopped short as the guard crossed his musket between her and the prisoner and held her back.

"No, no, mother Mag. It won't do, you know, for Captain Brant has promised that they shall not be injured, and I, for one, don't mean to make an enemy of Thayendanegea."

"You are a coward, to let an Indian frighten you like that."

"You ain't got anything to say against an Injin, much less a Mohawk, when you know that your meat and drink come from them this ten year or more," cried Tim. "I s'pose you have forgot who Jake Dockstader was, and the cross in his blood?"

"Your foul tongue has wagged too long, Tim Murphy," she hissed. "I tried to quiet it long ago, and failed. I shall not fail the second time, you may be sure. Ha, Ralph Campbell, madman, fool, what think you now of Mag, the Witch, and her revenge?"

Campbell raised his head and looked at her steadily, his clouded mind seeming to struggle for remembrance of her part in his wrongs. Mag quailed before the steady glare of those firm eyes, and stepped back a pace or two, muttering to herself.

"Her name?" cried Ralph. "Ah! I remember now. Mag, the Witch, demon, fiendish woman; if my hands were loose I would teach you what revenge is. The boy! She has him, and must give him up to me, dead or alive."

"Now do you call him crazy?" cried Mag. "It is an imposition intended to deceive the Mohawks. He is as sane as I am."

Indeed, he seemed so. His eyes no longer blazed with the fire of insanity, although he strove with all his might to break his bonds.

"Keep quiet," growled the Tory called Epps. "You'd better, ef you know what's good for you."

"Take her away, then, take her away. I cannot bear the sight of her cruel face. Take these cords off, will you? Her name is on my paper, and she is marked to die. Loose me, and let me do my work as quickly as I can."

"Go away, mother Mag," said the Tory.

"Go away, I say. You are driving him mad, and I've got orders ag'in' letting anybody talk with him."

Mag slowly retreated, shaking her hand at the prisoners and muttering invectives of the fiercest kind.

"Look to it," she said. "Before to-morrow night my revenge will be complete, and when Samuel Campbell lies wounded under my hand, I will shriek my name in his ear, and he will know who launched the bolt against him. Watch your prisoners well, Epps, for if I can get to them they will cumber the earth no more."

"You look out for her," said Tim. "She carries p'izoned weepens, and ef she gets a chaine she'll use 'em."

"I wouldn't care much," replied Epps.

Tim addressed one of the Mohawks in his own tongue, and he promised to see that she did not get near them. The sun went down, the stars came up in the sky, and then the clouds began to drift across the horizon, and a light snow fell, covering all the land. And there, in the November night, the band awaited the coming of the morning.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MASSACRE.

THE morning came slowly, a quiet, peaceful day, the white snow contrasting with the dark-

green foliage of the evergreens, and Cherry Valley was at peace. No one dreamed of danger, and the soldiery in the fort were dozing in their quarters, pitching quoits upon the green, or playing at cards for fabulous wealth in continental money. Colonel Alden, with his lieutenant-colonel, lodged with a family named Wells, outside the fort.

Moving cautiously forward, the Tories and Indians paused upon a low hill, covered with evergreens, from which they could look down upon the unsuspecting village.

Alden was a brave man, although far from a politic one. He had scouted the story of Indian incursions from conviction, on account of the retreat of Brant in the spring, and he did not think it possible that any great force threatened the village. He believed that it was but a repetition of the incursion in the spring, and having two hundred and fifty men under his command, the colonel slept in security.

The tenth of November, 1778, was a dark day in the history of the border colonies. Historians have striven to throw the blame of that fearful massacre entirely upon Brant, but the men who know best, and no one was better able to judge than the Campbell family, say that Walter Butler and his miscreants were more cruel than even the Senecas, the fiercest tribe of all. Thayendanegea has gone to his rest, long since. No doubt he killed many, but it was the fault of his Indian blood, and he fought according to the light he had. Certainly he was noble-minded enough to entertain a supreme contempt of Walter Butler and men of that class, and only joined them from policy.

The family had arisen and were sitting together in the large room in front of the house, conversing upon the prospects of war. The colonel was loud in his complaints against Campbell, who had so stirred up the fears of the people and had now gone to Fort Plain for reinforcements against his advice. The family of Wells were all in the room, his brother and sister and three of his sons, with Lieutenant-Colonel Stacia.

"I don't know, colonel," said Stacia. "Tim Murphy is hardly the man to scare us without a cause, and he brought the news from Schuyler."

"Murphy is a visionary sort of a fellow, and wanted to make his visit to Cherry Valley interesting."

"I think it would be as well to move the people into the fort for a day or two," persisted Stacia.

"I am not going to countenance any such foolishness, Stacia. Confound it, man, if we begin that sort of thing, we shall have the people running into the fort every time an Indian is seen."

"I hardly think Butler would injure our family," said Wells. "We were very intimate with him once."

"If you count upon the friendship of the Butler family you reckon without your host," said Stacia. "Their tender mercies are cruel in the extreme, and they hate the Whigs of Tyron beyond measure. Don't count upon ancient friendships in this case. I know that Brant, vilified as he is, will be more merciful than Walter Butler, who escaped from the noose by treachery, and

who would almost give his life for vengeance' sake."

"Bah! Walter Butler is not coming, I tell you," cried Alden. "You are infected with the popular fear, Stacia?"

"I never was accused of being a coward, sir," said Stacia.

"Nobody accuses you now, but it offends me to the soul to hear a man talk as you do, at this juncture."

At this moment there arose a clamor outside, and the rapid beat of hoofs. Stacia ran to the window and looked out, and saw a man coming at a breakneck gallop down the street, shouting as he came. The quick eye of the lieutenant-colonel recognized Tim Murphy, goading the horse he rode by touching him with the point of a knife. How had he escaped?

At the moment the Tory force was put in motion the prisoners had been released and hurried forward to give information which Butler desired before entering the town. Butler had some friends in Cherry Valley, and one especially whom he wished to save without the knowledge of Thayendanegea, who knew and hated the man.

"Come this way, Murphy," cried he. "I want to ask you a question."

Butler was in the saddle, and held a pistol in his hand, and he had no fear of anything the rifleman could do to harm him. He moved aside a little from the main body, and beckoned the prisoner close to him.

"Do you know a man named Moulton who lives, or did live, in Cherry Valley, Tim?"

"Yes, I do, and a p'izener critter don't walk upon two feet."

"Be careful, sir. James Moulton is my friend, and I wish to save him. Where is he now?"

"I reckon he don't need any help from you, capt'in."

"Why not?"

"'Cause he was shot as a spy at Schuyler a year ago, and is buried inside the fort. Gansevoort caught him sneaking round the fort, with the British instructions in his pocket, and that let him out."

Butler knitted his dark brows sternly at this news and made a fierce gesture with the hand which held the pistol, and Murphy saw the flint drop out of the lock. He was a man quick to act, and when an opportunity showed itself was always ready to take it. Lifting his hand suddenly, he dealt the Tory a terrible blow under the ear, which shot him out of the saddle upon the turf, and before the others had time to think what they would do, he was in the saddle, going down the hill like an arrow from a strong bow. There was a fierce yell from the savages, and a stream of flame leaped after him from the muzzles of their weapons, and he felt a sharp pain in his side as a bullet plowed its way along his ribs. The next moment he was in Techawara Pass, going with all the speed of the noble horse he bestrode. A ride for life or death. If he could only get to the village in time he might yet save many from the impending doom. He heard the swift patter of feet behind him, the word of command from many mouths, and the shrill yells of the savages, and these spurred him to new exertions. On, on, the wind singing past

his ears, his blood dropping on the sod, went the bold rifleman; he reached the village street and saw the house of Wells before him, where he knew Colonel Alden was staying.

"The colonel, the colonel!" he gasped. "Where is he?"

"Here," cried Stacia. "Colonel, come to the window."

"Pish!" said Alden, rising slowly. "Another alarm, I suppose. Well, sir, what is it?"

"You are in danger. Get to the fort as soon as you can and take the family with you. For your lives, for your lives! I will ride on and give the alarm."

To the surprise of every one the colonel sat down again with an indolent yawn.

"This is a plot against me," he said. "Tim Murphy is determined that I shall not have my breakfast, and I am equally determined that I will."

"For God's sake, colonel, don't delay," said Wells, in alarm. "Think of my family if there is any danger."

"Yip, yip, yip yab—hoo-oo-oo!" pealed the war-cry of the Senecas. That moment of indecision cost the unhappy family dear, for the swift-footed Indians had not been far behind the flying rifleman and had made straight for the house of Wells. Unfortunately for them, the Tories had stopped for a moment to look at their priming, which was out of order on account of the dampness, and during the pause, the Senecas, eager for blood, sprung on in advance. Mixed with the red group were several Tories of no less ferocity, and foremost of all came Neadawa, the Mute Chief, bearing a hatchet in one hand and a knife in the other, already stained with blood. The doors and windows were beaten down, and they poured in together upon the affrighted inmates. Alden saw too late that he had been deceived, and leaping from the window ran down the hill. But, Neadawa and Whistling Wind had singled him out as a victim and pursued. Twice the latter called upon him to surrender, to which he replied by snapping a pistol at them, but without effect, and then continued his flight. Being fleet of foot, he was widening the distance between them, when Neadawa stopped, and balanced his hatchet for a throw. A beam of light flashed through the air, and the unfortunate colonel went down.

Campbell's house was fortified strongly, for, seeing that Alden would do nothing to insure the safety of those committed to his charge, the colonel had taken every means in his power to protect his own people from assault. Strong shutters, securely bolted upon the inside, protected the windows, and the doors were guarded with iron bars. But Campbell being away, they had shared with Alden a certain feeling of security, and until Tim Murphy dashed up to the door they had no thought of danger; but Myra, who was at the door, called thither by the great tumult, was the first to see him.

"Injins!" he cried. "Into the house with you, and bar the doors."

Myra was quick to act, and Tim worked like a hero. Already the yells of the Indians sounded in their ears, and they heard the rush of coming feet, but the door of massive oak now

stood between them and their enemies. At the same time the Rangers of Butler poured into the town, driving before them a few scattered soldiers, who had been caught outside the fort. Stacia was a prisoner, Alden dead, and the command devolved upon minor officers, who had luckily reached the fort in time. But their weak numbers precluded the possibility of standing up against the heavy force of the enemy outside, and all they could hope to do was to defend the fort, without giving protection to the unfortunates of the village. Then was enacted one of those fearful scenes which so disgraced the history of those times. The family of Robert Wells perished miserably, although a faint effort was made by a Tory to save the unfortunate Jane, but, pushing him aside with one hand the ferocious savage who had marked her for his prey buried his hatchet in her temple.

The Reverend Mr. Dunlap, one of the pioneers of the settlement, saw his wife murdered before his eyes, and was only saved by the interposition of Little Aaron, the Mohawk, who, like Brant, did not delight in the slaughter of old men and helpless innocence. Mitchell, another pioneer, finding himself cut off from the village, took to the woods and escaped. Returning when the enemy had retired, he found his wife and three children lying dead under his burning roof, and a fourth child, a girl of tender age, with some little life remaining. While striving to revive her, he heard footsteps returning, and concealed himself just as a straggling party of Tories and Indians, led by a sergeant, named Newberry, rushed into the house. Seeing the girl upon the floor, mangled by his infamous associates, but still alive, he finished her struggles by a blow from a hatchet, while the wretched father, from his hiding-place, looked on in agony, unable to give her aid.

Mag the Witch was not idle, and with a blazing torch in one hand and a hatchet in the other, accompanied the Indians in their work of death. All that was savage in her nature seemed to be aroused by the bloody scene, and she laughed in demoniac glee as she passed the mangled forms of men and women she had hated when living. At last she came to Campbell's house, where with axes and a bar, a party of Tories and Mohawks, incited by Neadawa, were struggling to break in. The Mute Chief fought like a demon, his face full of fury, and the old woman saw that he had been wounded, for his left hand was enveloped in a bloody cloth. Uttering fierce but inarticulate cries, he aided the efforts as much as he could with his single hand, until, yielding at length to their united efforts, the great door went down with a crash, and they poured in to the destruction of the inmates. Murphy saw that all was over and that he must save himself. Myra was already struggling in the grasp of the Mute Chief, who evidently did not intend to slay her, for he pushed back Mag with his hatchet when she rushed at the prisoner with gleaming blade, making a savage signal of disapprobation.

"Where is Samuel Campbell?" screamed Mag. "Do you think I have waited all these years to be balked at last? Where is he, I say?"

"Where your malignity cannot reach him, thank Heaven," said Myra.

"Where is my son, Newberry?" cried the hag, addressing the Tory sergeant, who afterward killed Mitchell's child. "Why is he not here to see revenge torn from his grasp?"

"He stayed with the rear guard. That hand hurt him so much he wouldn't fight to-day."

"I believe my son is turning coward. What's that?"

A terrific combat sounded in the next room, and, bursting in the door, they were just in time to see Tim Murphy leap out of the window, leaving two Mohawks dead upon the floor. A furious attack upon the fort followed, in which the rifle of Tim Murphy avenged some of the poor murdered victims outside. He tried to get sight of Walter Butler or Dockstader, but both these worthies kept themselves well out of sight, having no desire to fall victims to the deadly aim of the man whose bullet had brought down Frazer, at Bemis Heights. Cherry Valley was a mass of smoking ruins, and among them lay the forms of thirty-two slain of the inhabitants and sixteen soldiers who had fallen in the first onset. And Myra Campbell, Samuel Campbell's wife, and many more, were led prisoners toward the distant North.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FATAL SHOT.

BUTLER, having done all the evil possible in Cherry Valley, called off his forces and began his retreat, having given up any slight idea he might have had of taking the fort itself for the infamous cowards under his command were only equal to the task of murdering unarmed men, women and children. Once out of the limits of the settlement, he broke up his band, who departed by different routes, with instructions to meet at a point not far from Canajoharie. The Mute Chief, with his prisoners, consisting of Ralph Campbell and his wife, with a dozen Indians and half as many Tory rangers and the savages, marched rapidly, forcing their prisoners with them, and threatening them with the greatest cruelties if they did not keep up. Half naked, pinched by cold and hunger, and Ralph suffering from a wound he had received by accident, it is a wonder that they did not perish on the way; but, woman's love for her husband is strong, and Myra was upheld by the wish to remain with her husband, and to comfort him. Mag the Witch was of the party, riding a shaggy Indian pony, and letting slip no opportunity of heaping indignities upon the unfortunate prisoners.

They camped at night upon one of the tributary branches of the Mohawk, and the Mute Chief approached the suffering woman, and offered her food and drink.

"Give it to my husband," she said. "He needs it more than I do."

Neadawa shook his head sternly, and made a signal for Whistling Wind to come up, giving him an order by his usual mode of communication.

"Eat," said Whistling Wind. "The chief commands."

"You may tell the chief then that a weak woman defies him, if he thinks to force her to eat, and will not give food to her husband."

"Then he will kill you," replied Whistling

Wind. "Beware that you do not rouse the bad blood in the heart of Neadawa."

"I can die, if need be, but I will not yield to him. Give my husband food and then I will eat too, and be grateful for it."

Seeing that she was not to be intimidated, they placed food and drink before Ralph Campbell, and unbound his hands. He had not tasted anything since the night before, and ate voraciously, now and then glancing at the set face of Neadawa in a fixed, intent way, as if studying something there which puzzled him. Seeing her husband eat, Myra also took some food, while the Indians and white men built fires and sat about them. There was a slight stripling in the dress of the Red Rangers who sat apart from the rest, scarcely exchanging a word with any one except Mag, and that in the Indian tongue. He kept his face turned away from the party, but there was something in his air which reminded Myra of some one she had seen before, and she called Whistling Wind.

"Who is that young Indian sitting by Mag?"

"Neadawa's son."

"The one who was in the village, ten years ago?"

The Indian nodded slowly, but refused to answer more questions. Shortly after, this Mag left her seat upon the log and came to the place where Myra was sitting.

"My revenge is not quite complete," she said. "Nor can it be until Samuel Campbell is dead. I shall live long enough to see that yet, and it is something to know that, when he returns to his home, he will find it desolate, his wife and children prisoners, and man nor child nor living thing remaining under his roof. This is all my work, *mine!* I am proud of it, so proud that I can hardly endure the feeling. You tremble, and you wonder why I hate him, and I think it time for you to know. Do you see this locket? Open it and look at the faces it contains."

She removed from her neck the golden locket, which she had opened upon the night when her son was banished, and placed it in Myra's hand, and the young wife looked wonderingly at the pictured faces.

"Do you recognize the faces?"

"No; yet it seems to me that in the man's face there is a likeness to my husband's uncle, Samuel Campbell."

"There is, and with good reason, for he was of the same blood—his cousin, though older than Campbell. You do not know the other face, but you have seen it often. Changed from what it was when that picture was painted forty years ago, but time sets his mark upon all faces. That picture is my own."

"Yours?"

"Yes. You look at me in wonder that I should lay claim to this, but it is true. That man was my husband, and my name was Margaret Fuller. I married him because he loved me, and for that his parents cast him off, and he died miserably in the flower of his youth, worn out by sorrow and toil. Why did they hate me? Because I was a Gitan, one of the outcast race of Egypt, and the daughter of a king among them. They hunted us down, the proud race of the Campbells, and never rested until my husband was under the sod; and that wealth which

should have been his, which would have saved him, went to this same Samuel Campbell, whom I hate. I came to him in New York and claimed my place, but he called me a Gypsy drab and cast me out. I was young then, and I swore that, sooner or later, I would have revenge. I left New York, helpless, homeless, and wandered out into the forest. There I was found by the man who became my husband, and I married him because he promised to avenge me on my adversary. But fate seemed against us. Three times his life was saved almost by a miracle, and at last, while tempering a poisoned knife for him, my husband wounded himself in the hand and perished. At this time we had followed the Campbells to Cherry Valley, in the hope of vengeance, and I was left alone with my son, then a boy of eighteen. I trained him up for vengeance, and, after long years, he succeeded. Then, years ago your husband brought upon his head the same vengeance, and you see the result."

"Cruel woman, do you not see that all this is recoiling on yourself? It is true that you have destroyed my happiness, but what does it avail you, when you know that the man you have pursued so remorselessly for many years has escaped from your toils?"

"There is time yet. He knows from whence the blow comes—none so well as he, and when he looks upon his ruined home he will say, 'Margaret has been at work.'"

"Yet we defy you still, and God will yet require justice at your hands for the innocent blood you have been the means of shedding. It is a long road of guilt and crime you have traveled, but something speaks to me and tells me that your time is nearly done. A prophetic voice—the utterance of which I cannot understand—tells me this. And when you come to the bar of God, how will you answer for the crimes of which you are guilty? The blood of all the martyred innocents of Cherry Valley is on your soul."

"Some fiend makes you speak in this way, woman. What care I if a hundred tongues cry out against me? I have had revenge, and Gilbert Warrington, my husband, is in part avenged. When your feet bleed in the weary march to Canada, when you see your husband at the stake, remember that it is my work."

"Where is your son? Even he cannot be as cruel as you are."

"He will meet us after we cross the Mohawk, and when he does, bid good-by to your husband, for there he meets his fate. I am not one to turn back from any course I have marked out, and I will tread it unflinchingly, even to the end."

"Leave me to myself, vindictive woman," said Myra, covering her face.

At this moment, one of the Tories spoke some sharp words to Whistling Wind, and pointed to the prisoners as he did so, and the savage called to the Mute Chief.

"This white man says they shall not be wronged!" he shrieked. "And I say that they shall burn."

The Mute Chief shook his head, and his quick fingers flashed out a reply.

"You say that the man we may burn, but the

woman must come into your lodge?" demanded Whistling Wind.

Neadawa made an affirmative gesture, and Whistling Wind looked gratified.

"Wait," said Mag, starting up. "This must not be. Do you think I have worked for my son so long, to see him robbed of his revenge at this late hour? You must wait until he comes."

"When men go out upon the war-path, the women must keep silent," said Whistling Wind, in the Indian tongue, which she perfectly understood. "Woman, what do the Mohawks care for your son?"

"Fool!" she hissed. "You know not what you say. Dockstader must be here when the fire curls up about the body of Ralph Campbell."

"He must die now!" replied Whistling Wind, "or he will escape. I heard Butler and Captain Brant whisper in each other's ears that the prisoners should be set free when they reached the Mohawk. Shall all our labor be in vain?"

"You shall wait for my son," replied Mag. "Are you the man to brave me, Whistling Wind? I defy you and all your red fiends, and say that Ralph Campbell must live until my son comes."

During this dialogue, the Mute Chief stood with his head bent in thoughtful attitude and his hand playing with the handle of his hatchet, evidently loth to interfere.

"You have said that he shall die," said the old Mohawk, appealing to the Mute Chief. "Tell this woman, so that she may hear it."

"I care no more for his commands than yours, so that you need not trouble him," replied Mag. "Once for all, you must wait."

Whistling Wind made a sudden spring, designing to seize the old woman and thrust her aside; but, to the horror of all, she made a cat-like leap to one side, and something bright flashed in the rays of the declining sun. So sudden was the blow, that not a hand could be raised to interfere, and Whistling Wind fell.

The Indians rose as one man, and tomahawks and knives flashed in the sunrays. It was at this moment that Ralph Campbell, who had been working at the cords upon his legs during this scene, completely cleared his limbs from the rope, and, seizing his wife by the waist placed himself at one bound in the midst of the Tory guard, who rose with leveled weapons to protect him.

"I warned him," screamed Mag. "Ha! ha! Who else among you will try the poisoned dagger of Mag the Witch? Let him speak now, or hold his peace forever."

The Mute Chief had given utterance to one of his inarticulate cries when Whistling Wind fell, and stood apparently stupefied at the horrible act, while his companions leveled their weapons at the heart of the old woman. He ran in before their weapons and pushed them back, and then, raising the body of Whistling Wind, he laid it on the sod and thrust his hand into the clothing to see if he yet lived. This man had been useful to him, a sort of interpreter in the little he had to say, and had clung to his fortunes closely. And now, he lay dead. Neadawa staggered to his feet and looked at the Indians, who had as yet made no attempt to take back

their prisoners, or to avenge the death of Whistling Wind. They waited for the orders of their chief.

One, who was a leading brave, spoke a few words to Neadawa in the Indian tongue, and asked him if he should be spokesman, and the chief inclined his head in an uncertain manner.

The Indian who had been selected as spokesman advanced, and spread out his hands in an impressive gesture.

"My brothers, see what has been done," he said. "Whistling Wind lies dead, and this woman is his murderer. The Mute Chief asks through me, that you should give her up to us."

"I can't do that," replied a Tory sergeant. "The man had no business to touch her. She's a born devil, I allow, but though she's guilty by our law, and must hang for it, I won't give her up to your tender mercies."

"The chief will not take this for an answer. His friend is dead, and he can not wait for the slow justice of the white man. He would have her die at once."

"Does he say that?" screamed Mag.

"Yes."

Mag snatched a pistol from the belt of the man who stood nearest, and discharged its contents into the bosom of the Mute Chief. He threw up his hands, and, as he fell, to the surprise and horror of all, the mute tongue spoke. "You have killed me, mother!"

It was the voice of the half-breed, Tom Dockstader.

CHAPTER XII.

IN HIS OWN SNARE.

MAG, with a fearful cry of agony, ran to the side of her dying son and raised his head upon her lap. She saw now how she herself had been deceived by her son, in his assumed character of the Mute Chief. Paint had disguised his face, and the tongue which would have betrayed him, he had with almost superhuman fortitude kept chained for many years, rather than lose caste among the Mohawks. His long disappearances from Cherry Valley were now explained, for they understood that, at these times, in his character as the Mute Chief, he had taken part in the wars of the Mohawks. Living apart from them as he did, rarely seeing any one except his Indian wife, it is no wonder that he had not been long ago detected. He had kept up the deception even with his mother, only visiting her in his true character. Even Whistling Wind, who had been his faithful servant for twenty years, during which he had worn the garb of the Mohawk at intervals, never doubted but that he was a true Indian, as, indeed, he was at heart. Possessing all the taciturn demeanor of the savage, taken from his father, and added to the fact that his tongue was silent, he had kept up the deceit, even unto death.

"It is all over, mother. I'm shot to death, but I little thought yours would be the hand to strike the blow, and that in the defense of Ralph Campbell."

"It was for your sake I did it. My poor boy—my boy Tom! Oh, that I should ever live to see this day."

"Drat it, mother, never mind. I've thought

all my life I'd never die in bed, and I don't know that I keer to. Mine has been a wild life, and it has a wild ending. Don't think I'm turnin' soft because I ask you something that'll go ag'in the grain. Look at Ralph Campbell; he's been my enemy through life, and now I look at him, it seems to me it would hev bin less punishment for him ef we'd a-killed him that night than to let him live as he does. Drop it, and do your best to make amends."

"Not I!" replied Mag, hoarsely. "You wouldn't ask it but that the death-damp is gatherin' on your forehead, the death I gave you—I, that loved you so much and so long."

"I don't know what to say to you, mother. I know that you've had great wrongs, and suffered much, but so have they. Whar's the boy? Ef you won't tell them, I must."

At this moment the clatter of hoofs was heard, and a large party of the Tory rangers, led by Butler, and accompanied by Joseph Brant, rode up and joined them.

"What is this?" cried Brant, in alarm. "Who has slain Neadawa?"

"Neadawa no more," replied Dockstader, in a hollow voice. "You see no longer the Mute Chief, but Tom Dockstader, the descendant of a Mohawk chief, lies dying here. I've been a wicked man, but I've always done justice to the Indians—always."

Thayendanega turned away, and descending from the saddle, saluted Myra courteously, who was yet standing, encircled by the arm of her husband, while Mag still held her defiant attitude. Just then a boy in the dress of the Tory rangers, tall and strong, with a brown, but handsome, face, rode up and addressed the son of Neadawa in the Indian tongue. Dockstader raised himself with an effort, and pointing to the lad, cried out:

"There is your son, Myra Campbell; pray for the rest of my soul."

With these words his spirit fled, and the boy who had been pointed out became the observed of all eyes. Myra opened her arms, and, with a joyful cry, he ran to her and threw himself into them, and was fondly pressed to that maternal breast. Gypsy Mag the Witch glared with wolfish eyes about her, and crying, "I will triumph yet," sprung at the pair with uplifted knife. But, slipping, she fell prostrate, and the dagger found a sheath in her own breast.

Young Ralph Campbell and his father stood face to face, a startled expression in the countenance of the elder, and of wonder and pity in that of the boy. He had not forgotten the beautiful face of his mother nor the stately form of his father. Suddenly the maniac put his hand to his head, gave a terrible cry, and fell at the feet of his son. Walter Butler's surgeon was

with the party, and he attended to the fallen man, and, after a great effort, brought him back to consciousness. When his eyes opened they no longer beamed with the fires of madness, and he knew the face of his wife.

"My darling," he cried, "how is this? Where am I?"

"You have been very ill," replied Myra, "but you are better now. Is he not, doctor?"

"Certainly; as healthy in every way as you and I. In fact, cured by the shock of meeting his son so suddenly after many years."

"Thank you, doctor. Look, Ralph, here is our son, and though he has forgotten the language he learned from my lips, he knew me in an instant. Captain Brant, where are we to go?"

"You are to be released and allowed to go to Fort Plain. I am sorry that my men forgot themselves in their desire for blood, but it has turned out happily for you. Two such enemies as those who lie dead one could not easily find. Six of my young men shall take you safely within sight of Fort Plain, and may the people of Cherry Valley in the time to come, beware how they insult a great chief."

"My son goes with me, does he not, captain? You would not separate us."

"It shall be as he says," said the chief, speaking to the boy in the Indian tongue. He threw his arm about his mother's neck by way of reply."

"It is enough!" said Thayendanega. "The love of his mother is strong in the boy's heart, and he will go home with her. Let him remember that the Indians loved him well."

He picked out a guard of trusty men, and bade him farewell. The rescued party, father, mother and son, escorted by the six strong Mohawks, set out toward the friendly village, which they reached in safety.

Ralph was in weak health for over a year, but at the end of that time a strong constitution triumphed, and he became the same strong man he was before this affliction fell upon him.

The Indian boy who had been called the son of Neadawa, was indeed his child, for, unknown to his mother, he had married a woman of the Mohawk nation in his character as the Mute Chief. He was now a young man, nearly twenty years of age, and had remained the true friend of little Ralph during his imprisonment. He remained with the Mohawks, and in time became a celebrated warrior, lived a brave life, and died, at a green old age, in the lodges of his people.

Tim Murphy lived through the war and trained his recovered pet in woodcraft. His name is not unknown in the annals of "Old Tryon."

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